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Class and Cultural Narratives The Upper Silesia Case

Paweł Ćwikła, Monika Gnieciak, Kazimiera Wódz



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Introduction

The social world of Upper Silesia

The Silesian Voivodship exemplifies a region where the industrial past has left a permanent mark on spatial forms, social relations, institutions, patterns of culture as well as collective identifications and individual biographies (Wódz, 2013: 7). At the same time, the geographical location of Upper Silesia has determined its cultural character – in its over thousand years long history it belonged to various political, civilizational, economic, social and cultural orders: Polish, Czech, Prussian or German (Geisler, 2009: 67). Hence, Upper Silesia is a typical example of a borderland, where different ethnic groups and distinct cultural traditions intermingle (Wódz, K., Wódz, J., 2006: 12). Add to this the peculiarity of settling Upper Silesia in the time of the Polish People's Republic, unification related to the dynamics of the national culture of every day and popular culture or – in broader terms – globalisation and the dissemination of definite patterns and lifestyles that accompany it. All of these contribute to the validity of the question of the region's contemporary cultural identity.

The traditional image of Silesianness established in subject matter literature consists of: cross-border cultural diffusion, specific economic past, distinctive dialect and a number of ethos features of the Upper Silesia workers communities. Among them, at the very heart there is positive valorisation of hard manual labour, religiousness and strong social control marking the norms of the life in a mining (metallurgy, factory, etc.) settlement. The latter manifested itself in direct interactions being part of extensive bonds of relationship and neighbourhood, also overlapping the vocational life connected with local workplaces, parishes and municipal districts: “[...] living in communities inhabiting workplace housing estates related to a sense of far greater familiarity and attachment. It was based on close neighbourly relations and almost familial way of life within particular *familok* houses. This intimacy translated itself into mutual help and support, spending time collectively, mutually paid casual visits, collective celebration of holidays and other events important for the community members, the rules and spirit of the community included leaving the front door unlocked, which allowed other residents of the house to enter freely” (Mandrysz, 2011: 105). Rooted in everyday routine the norms of social life were influenced by a deep, generation-wide bond with the workplace – the industrial centre which has shaped its workers’ lives multidimensionally.

Over the centuries two economic orders have dominated in the Silesian landscape: agrarian and industrial. They jointly shaped the peculiar plebeian-proletarian cultural character of the region. The change that occurred after World War II, when the leaders of the Polish People’s Republic decided to grant Upper Silesia an exclusively industrial specificity, brought about the breakup of the traditional model of indigenous communities’ functioning: “the region was treated in a special way by the communist authorities” (Wódz, K., Wódz, J., 2006: 15). The special treatment consisted, on the one hand, of the fact that the authorities paid attention to the development of the traditional industries (mining was one of the basic branches on which the state earned hard currency), thus also to the development of towns located in the region, on the other hand, special care was taken to make the political control eliminate any manifestations of the cultural distinctness of the region. As a result, there was a situa-

tion in which the native inhabitants of the region reduced their cultural life (in which the specific, distinctive features of Silesian culture were manifest) to family life and relations within local communities (Wódz, K., Wódz, J., 2006: 15–16). During this period of time, to put it in Pierre Bourdieu's terms, the fully developed, traditional forms of the Silesian culture, till then very much institutionalised and thus continuously reinforced, ceased to be reproduced. This was the first stage of dismantling of the local cultural and social values – deeply rooted in the Silesians' mentality and identity. The 20th century saw further changes in the cultural mosaics of the region. Started in 1989–1990 the industrial transformation (naturally effected by the system transformation) brought about the region's deindustrialization resulting in the restructuring of industrial centres and massive reduction of employment in mining. A rapid liquidation of the recently dominating branches of industry (chiefly extractive and metallurgical) triggered many previously not predicted, negative phenomena such as destabilisation and pauperisation of working-class communities, degradation of urban space, appearance of extensive urban waste and dilapidation of former mine- or factory-owned buildings, emergence of poverty enclaves, ghettos, inhabited by individuals and families dependent on social welfare, threatened by social exclusion (Wódz, K., Wódz, J., 2006). The problems were taking on dramatic dimensions especially where the falling industry had not been replaced by any considerable investments, where new workplaces in the service sector (especially if these are specialist services requiring high qualifications, such as financial, legal, consulting, educational, PR, etc.) cannot compensate losses related to the winding up of establishments previously employing hundreds or thousands of employees – including significant groups of narrowly qualified blue collar workers (Wódz, Gnieciak, 2011: 100). The restructuring of the steelworks and closedown of the coalmines forced the residents of factory housing estates to look for jobs outside of vicinities. Everyday commuting disturbed the established rhythm of life of the so far mining settlements, thus cutting Silesians off from their familiar space. People started to distance themselves from one another both in the sense of space and in terms of the weakening of neighbourly bonds. Transitioning from one job to another caused diversification of wages, lifestyle changes,

deviation from the established framework of community life (Wódz, Gnieciak, 2014). In the aftermath of this process the Silesia rooted in tradition ceased to exist and its social image underwent a dramatic change. The process of reproduction and creation of an axionormative system – a set of professed, experienced and practised values as well as their expressive norms and rules of practical behaviours and actions – has been relaxed. Accordingly, it became more important for researchers to be looking for some traces of the representation of Silesian specificity in popular culture artefacts. All the more that the end of the Polish People's Republic in 1989 did not manifest itself only in traumatic economic restructuring as also simultaneously led to the empowerment of national minorities, ethnic groups and provincial communities (Browarny, 2012, <http://www.polska-niemcy-interakcje.pl>). The system transformation was accompanied by a process of reviewing the collective memory, being thus far selective or ideologically distorted. Works by Silesian writers that were created during that period of time constitute an integral element of the process. By means of autobiographies, family stories and regional novels, the story of Silesia was retold, constructed out of a variety of memories and personal narratives. The region's history has become a private, familial history, a report on the neighbours' fate, the trajectory of development and downfall of communities, settlements, towns (Uniłowski, 2001).

In this very book we deal with the identity of Upper Silesia and of the Silesians, tracking the traces of their presence in literature, which due to the authors' age and output refers to the Silesian reality as seen from the perspective of the 1990s. The writers' memories inevitably stem from the reality of the Polish People's Republic, and it is through the lens of that era that we will be following the transformations of Silesian *structures of feeling* captured in the regional literature. Regional as it is rooted in that part of the world, but also global (or put more narrowly: national) due to the authors' talent and a wide cultural perspective featuring their writings. The novels / the writers' memories constitute a particular type of the social representations of Upper Silesia, the representations which belong to a community within which they are created to a greater extent than to an individual. Their nature consists in ongoing reproduction, redefinition, constant

creation. Rather than a matter to be taken for granted, they build up identities based on a collective definition of reality.

These notions of identity and its representation were put under examination in the SPHERE¹ Project (the 7th UE Programme) – aimed to study the cultural, social and economic transformations which occurred in communities whose past was connected with the heavy industry. The research included both the mechanisms of development of new individual and group identities and the attempts to preserve traditional identities. The purpose of the detailed analyses was to determine the influence of the economic transformations on the changes in the sense of an “attachment to place, ‘private homeland’ and their significance to individual ‘history’ and social belonging” (Wódz, 2013: 14). We refer to the research conducted by Professor K. Wódz, hence this book contains overt references to *Restructuring Class and Gender. Six Case Studies* (Wódz, Gnieciak, 2012).

Silesian identity and its representations

The emphasis in this book is put on understanding local identities through the representations produced and disseminated by the local people, the residents of the working-class estates placed in Upper Silesia. As sociologists we wish to emphasise that it is important to remember that representations are “a form of social thought” (Jodelet, 1984). The notion of identity and its reflection in regional representations is determined within the conception of Bausinger for whom social identity “[...] is the whole of the subject’s constructs referred to

¹ SPHERE was the acronym of a European Union project funded by the Directorate General Research under its Seventh Research Framework (FP7). Its full title was *Space, Place and the Historical and contemporary articulations of regional, national and European identities through work and community in areas undergoing economic REstructuring and regeneration*, and the project ran from April 2008 to September 2011 covering 6 countries (Poland, England, France, Germany, Spain and Turkey) carrying out research into the transformations occurring in the European postindustrial regions. The Polish research included the internal division of the Silesian Voivodship to reflect its actual differentiation into Silesia and Zagłębie, and two towns were selected: Ruda Śląska (the estates of Godula, Nowy Bytom, Wirek) in the Silesian part and the borderland of Dąbrowa Górnicza and Będzin (the estates of Ksawera and Koszelew) in the Zagłębie part. The research was conducted by researchers from the University of Silesia under the direction of Professor Kazimiera Wódz.

one another – the whole is not just a sum of the elements; its array is somehow integrated. Elements of the construction of self are derived from identification with other persons or groups, with selected social structures as part of the system of I – Other; they are also derivatives of such culture categories as norm values and even artefacts” (Bokszański, 1989: 50). Mediated by the already mentioned cultural artefacts, that is film, art, literature, collective identities consist of, in accordance with Ralph H. Turner’s model, the “self-image,” that is a kind of image of a given community in collective consciousness and the “self-concept” based on it, which is changing slowly because it is perceived by individuals and groups as posing coherent and sustainable characteristics of the subject (Bokszański, 1989: 50). These two elements make up the regional identity, which – according to Piotr Sztompka (2003) – should be understood as “a sense of community and identification with members of a certain community expressed subjectively with the phrase ‘we,’ which is accompanied by an awareness of being separate from those outside termed ‘they’” (2003).

Therefore, the category of identity as employed in this book is connected with the search for the Silesians’ own image contained in the literature of the region seen in a particular perspective. The above-described events of the 20th century and the turn of the centuries did make some of the researchers concede that as a result of some deep social changes that occurred during the mentioned period of time, the Silesian identity constitutes now a special creation, a cultural form functioning in the manner of an “invented tradition” as described by a British historian Eric Hobsbawm. In his approach, thus constructed identity is “a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past” (Hobsbawm, 2000: 1). Hence, through literature we try to find the image of Silesian identity it recorded, composing the social (self-) concept of the region. Our attempts are at grasping the formation and evolution of written identities, historically rooted in industrial societies, mainly touching upon the prevailing occupational structure, consequently, it concentrates on the process of transformation of

industrial cultures. Through the analyses of literature, the book seeks to clarify the significance of such changes for the culture of the Silesia region.

The notion of identity does not appear so often by mere accident: “forced by the external economic conditions deindustrialisation processes adversely affect the overall life of the residents of former workers’ settlements principally situated near former places of work – factories, steelworks or mines. For them the fall of their works often means the beginning of their personal and family drama, fight for survival and identity dilemmas connected with attempts to find oneself in a new reality – determined by a new symbolic order emerging along with the crisis of Keynesianism and welfare state, based on the doctrine of neoclassical economics and the economic practice of deregulation” (Harvey, 1989). Thus, identity tensions are the main area of investigations throughout the research, in which the focus was on capturing the moment of change, of reconfiguration of the old patterns into new ones.

Working-class culture through *structures of feeling*

In our work we frame the presence and interaction of representations and cultural productions brought to the surface, through Raymond Williams’s concept of *structures of feeling*. Wishing to identify meanings and values that are actually lived and felt, “and the relation between these and formal or systematic beliefs” (Williams, 1977: 132), he uses the term ‘feeling’ to draw a distinction with the more potentially ‘fixed’ notion of ideology as ‘world view.’ Williams viewed structures of feeling as the articulation of a “kind of feeling and thinking which is indeed social and material.” As a mode of cultural analysis, structures of feeling provide confirmation of the vital, lived experiences or attitudes of a group or of a society in a period, defining a particular quality of social action, within unsteady processes of historical change. His approach emphasises the bumpiness and the dynamic quality of particular moments and periods in which he posits an interplay between dominant, residual and emergent consciousness that helps make sense of structure and agency (Kirk, 2008: 6). Their

development was analysed by means of the tools used during the research on narration and discourse analysis. Identity is bound up with where one lives and, in that sense, as Raymond Williams pointed out long ago, identity is ordinary (1958). It is inscribed in the everyday; configured through those practices actors are engaged in (or excluded from) and which shape complex relations of belonging. But identity is clearly more than just the sole experience of where one lives, the everyday social interactions, say, of neighbourhood, community, workplace or town, no matter how significant they may be. Identity may be a product of local/regional structures and practices, but how it interacts in a range of ways with wider identity forms and material practices associated with nation and state is a crucial dynamic, too, in the shaping of individuals and communities.

The historic development of identity significantly marks and defines what a region is about, in as much as a region and its evolution will impact in turn upon those identities. Identity is not a static concept. Therefore, the central aim of the following discussion is to illuminate the traditions, alignments and forms that shape experience over time. Identity is bound up with notions of place-belonging (Kirk, 2008: 6).

The assumption which was fundamental to the analysis was the fact that literature holds a reservoir of identity representations. Williams argues that in the production of literature for example, “the actual living sense, the deep community that makes the communication possible, is naturally drawn upon” (1965: 64). Cultural representation is critical to the identity, belonging and ‘feeling’ of people in relation to their sense of place, space and self (Contrepois, Jefferys, Ross, 2011: 1). Moscovici adds that the representations constitute “consensual universes of thought which are socially created and socially communicated to form part of ‘common consciousness.’” Social representations as common knowledge represent a trunk from which common-sense theories stem, they are “cognitive systems with a logic and language of their own [...]” (Moscovici, 1984, after Niesiobędzka, 2005: 14). Social representations, as a Polish researcher Cezary Trutkowski emphasises, “make the unknown known – their specific role consists in ‘domesticating’ the reality, making it understandable for individuals. The ‘unknown’ is converted into the ‘known’ thanks to

the existence of two processes which contribute to the transformation of social representations through the inclusion of new elements into their existing systems" (199: 10). These cognitive systems do not represent individual opinions, images or attitudes, but they are specifically shaped social 'theories' enabling cognition and structuring of reality. Thus, they are the basis for creation of individual and social identities (Niesiobędzka, 2005: 14). As another critic, Jean-Claude Abric, commented on the function of representations "all reality is represented, that is to say appropriated by the individual or the group, rebuilt in its cognitive system, integrated into its system of values depending on its history and of the social and ideological context that surrounds it" (Abric, 1994: 15), and the interpretation the author adopts corresponds with the social function of literary creation understood in accordance with Williams in the above-quoted sentence. Abric later says: "Values and the context in which they are created have an influence on the construction of reality. In social representations there will always be a part of individual or collective production, creation. For that reason, they will never stay for ever, even if their evolution tends to be a very slow process. As bearers of meaning, social representations establish a bond and, in this sense, they have a social function which help people communicate and find themselves in their environment and act. They also define what is legal, tolerable or unacceptable in a given social context (Abric, 1994/1997: 16, after Mugny, Carugati, 1989).

The social representations that circulate in our culture are shaped by and in turn shape the socio-economic context of their time and are both public-facing and internalised. As noted by Williams (1977) stories or narratives – representations – have a hegemonic function and become naturalised as the 'common sense' of society and as 'just the way things are' – whether this is to do with political, oral or culturally representational narratives and forms. People live through and alongside distinctive cultural representations that are either received and embraced or created and thus 'made' (Contrepois, Jefferys, Ross, 2011: 6). We based our search for analytical units for the research on the statement found in Howard S. Becker's book *Telling about the Society*. Simply put, a 'representation of society' is something someone tells us about some aspects of social life" (Becker,

2007: 6). Later on, the author noted: “My own professional colleagues – sociologists and other social scientists – like to talk as though they have a monopoly on creating such representations, as though the knowledge of society they produce is the only ‘real’ knowledge about the subject. That’s not true. And they like to make the equally silly claim that the ways they have of telling about society are the best ways to do that job or the only way it can be done properly” (Becker, 2007: 5–6). In the discussed project we hopefully managed to avoid similarly false assumptions. According to Williams, literature is yet another way of depicting society, and that which makes it different from sociological presentations is the method of collecting data, type of record and also a different intended use, but what it has in common with them is the fact that it is a specific kind of representation of definite social problems. As Lancaster (1997: 24) pointed out, while regions are often the product of distinct economic forces, they are also constructs “that are created both by people who live in them as well as those who observe them externally and that it is the act of reflection on this process that constitutes the formation of the region.” They are also myths – imagined communities – that interact with material forms (Anderson, 1983). John Kirk, a British researcher behind the creation of the SPHERE project, in his *Classifying Matters* makes a reference to the claim made by Beverley Skeggs (2004) who emphasised the role of the novel in the development of images on the reality of great social communities. He believes that since the industrial revolution the realistic novel has performed important social functions, specifically educational and ideological ones, shaping tastes, and its readership became a distinctive feature of the privileged with access to cultural capital enabling social reproduction of the class. The novel worked as a kind of a “moral magnet” for the bourgeois, something that helped shape answers to important social problems that can be solved only in reference to “ideological work.” “As a new emerging cultural form since the mid-19th century the novel began to exert an influence not only on the understanding of the situation of other groups, but also on the shaping of the self-image of the writer’s background. This long-standing idea has secured its place in the *Encyclopaedia of Sociology* where what is emphasised is the importance of literature as a kind of production of forms of

insight into the social world” (Łęcki, 1999: 128). Referring the above remark to Kirk’s reflection one should say that literature, including the novel, would play a significant role of both cognitive and creative nature. This perspective on literature is not new in Polish sociology: As Ossowski observes (1983: 233): “*The Magic Mountain* [...] will deepen a reader’s knowledge much better than a scientific work. One can learn a lot about crowd psychology from Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*, psychoanalysis from *Hamlet*, *Richard III*, Slowacki’s *Kordian*, Mickiewicz’s *Dziady Part IV*, Dostoyevsky’s novels, which anticipated Freud and his successors.” Another researcher studying sociological aspects of literature, Arnold Hauser (1980: 293) so writes about the author of *The Experimental Novel*: “Zola’s literary theories are not entirely free of charlatanism, but his novels have, nevertheless, a certain theoretical value, for, even if they do not contain any new scientific insights, they are, as has rightly been said, the creations of a considerable sociologist.” Jerzy Topolski (1978: 13) explained the common territory of sociology and the novel by commenting that “the novel [...] used to be and sometimes is a predecessor of science as it captures and presents matters which take a long time to be studied scientifically. This is clearly seen on the example of two sciences which came into being in the 19th century, one of them is the science on human’s mental life – psychology, the other, sociology, deals with the collective life of individuals. The issues within the scope of the sciences appeared first in the 19th century in novels, which thus paved the way for scientific investigations.” And when Balzac described himself as a Doctor of Social Sciences there was “in this designation – as Wolf Lepenies said (1997: 22) – a little self-irony and a great deal of self-awareness,” his *Human Comedy* was first to be entitled *Social Studies* (Ćwikła, 2006: 140).

As mentioned above, the main theoretical interpretation we assumed is the thought of Raymond Williams, sociologist and literary scholar, who made literary analysis one of the most important interpretations of British theory of social class. The working class and its reflection in the literary output allowed him to follow the transformations, atmosphere and problems of the industrialized society in the mid-20th century. Williams, analysing the components of working-class culture in *Culture and Society* (1958) argued that

“the culture which [the working class] has produced, and which it is important to recognise, is the collective democratic institution, whether in the trade unions, the co-operative movement, or a political party” (Williams, 1958: 313). Within this view culture is more than mere artistic production or development of ideas; instead, we have a definition of culture and its products as bound within a ‘whole way of life,’ embedded in experiences and practices, formalised in institutions, instantiated in experiential dispositions and actions and evidenced in complex ways Williams called *structures of feeling* (Kirk, 2008: 2).

This conceptualisation is akin to Pierre Bourdieu’s celebrated notion of the habitus as a process constitutive of subjectivity, one powerfully shaping the construction of class formations, and vital, for Bourdieu, in terms of social reproduction (1991). According to Bourdieu, the internalised structure of the habitus acts as a classifying mechanism for making sense of the world – embedded dispositions at an almost unconscious level that generate in the actor a spontaneous response to the world they inhabit: a kind of ‘feel for the game,’ or a ‘design for life.’ For Bourdieu, the dispositions constituting the habitus, when activated, work to reproduce the social structures that shaped them in the first place. The notion of subconscious, corporeal learning which makes up the habitus, and which attunes individuals to the circumstances of their existence, offers a key insight into the questions of social reproduction (Kirk, 2008: 3).

Bourdieu’s concept constitutes a milestone in its tendency to privilege the substantial, economic and objectivist approach to social class. In the model proposed by the French sociologist, classes do not have to be reduced to the economic field as theoretical entities (“classes on paper”), they are not real groups (effectively mobilized groups). It is the symbolic struggle which determines what kind of social fields and social differences will, if it is the case, represent class differences (Bourdieu, 1985). Bourdieu emphasises the objective character of social space which determines compatibility and incompatibility, class proximity and distance, at the same time warning against treating classes as entities existing independently in social space, and classes described in statistical analysis (one of the manifestations of the structure of social space) – as real groups. What is

therefore particularly important to notice is the difference between statistical analysis and studying class awareness. For Bourdieu statistical analysis demonstrates abstract indications of the internal structure of social space, which only “explains the likelihood of individuals linking with each other in groups, families, associations and even trade unions or political movements” (Bourdieu, 1985: 725). Distances between the statistically analysed positions within the social structures are related to the likelihood of group mobilisation and constitute class construction. The likelihood of mobilisation rises if the positions in the social space are proximate.

The assumed importance of the concept of class is very close to the notion of the working-class culture adopted after Raymond Williams’s concept, wherein culture is “a particular way of life which expresses certain meanings and values not only in art and learning but also in institutions and ordinary behaviour” (Williams, 1961: 41). Following this paradigm, we concentrated on the lived culture of a particular time and place, in context, which means “the basic collective idea, and the institutions, manners, habits of thought, and intention which proceed from this. Bourgeois culture, similarly, is the basic individualist idea and the institutions, manners, habits of thought, and intention which proceed from that” (Williams, 1985: 313). In other words, we have dealt with culture formation, which for Williams is “a dialectical process involving hegemonic and oppositional forces, a field where residual, dominant and emergent tendencies involving class, ethnicity, gender, age and locality all converge and collide” (Zembylas, 2002: 188).

Yet, such a view of identity formation, as it has been suggested, undercuts a sense of *agency* in Bourdieu’s approach to this phenomenon (see Sayer, 2005). In our book we studied the passing of the working-class communities. Owing to the methodological tools developed by Williams, the analysis of identity, literature and social class could acquire its theoretically coherent shape as described below.

Class theory in Williams's and Bourdieu's writing

John Kirk's theory proposes a unique combination of perspectives adopted in the writings of Pierre Bourdieu and Raymond Williams. His stance was inspired by Andrew Sayer's article *The Moral Significance of Class* (2005). Sayer's work is a critical analysis of Bourdieu's theory and at the same time constitutes a proposition to extend the concept of habitus by a new, moral dimension of analysis. Sayer has retained Bourdieu's ideas of habitus, class and social field but criticises the stress the French sociologist puts almost exclusively on the habitual and instrumental aspects of social action while underestimating the individual's reflectivity and rationality. Sayer highlights the unsatisfactory way Bourdieu's theory articulated classness by means of dimensions of social inequity other than tastes (Ollivier, 2006). "Class matters to us" (2005) – postulates Sayer pointing to the influence that the individual's class location has on the emotional and also moral dimension of their existence: "not only because of differences in material wealth and economic security, but also because it affects our access to things, relationships, experiences and practices which we have reason to value, and enhance our chances of living a fulfilling life" (2005: 1).² "We are normative beings, in the sense that we are concerned about the world and the well-being of what we value in it, including ourselves. The most important questions and concerns people tend to face in their everyday lives are normative ones of how to act, what to do for the best, what is good or bad about what is happening, including how others are treating them and things which they care about. The presence of this concern may be evident in fleeting encounters and conversations, in feelings about how things are going, as well as in momentous decisions such as whether to have children, how to deal with a relationship which has gone bad or change a job. These are things which people care about deeply, and to which they may form commitments – so much so in some cases that they value them more than their own lives" (Sayer, 2005a: 948).

² At this point the author refers to the noteworthy words by Annette Kuhn: "Class is something beneath your clothes, under your skin, in your reflexes, in your psyche, at the very core of your being" (1995).

In order to understand experience derived from an individual's class location, a social researcher must consider "emotional and evaluative aspects of the relations of self to self and self to other" (Sayer, 2005: 22). According to Sayer, Bourdieu's *habitus* refers to those deeply engrained dispositions which are the products of socialisation, particularly in early life (although it is known that later experiences may modify the *habitus* by producing new dispositions and abilities enabling new more adequate reaction) and which orient individuals, at a subconscious level towards the world around them. (Sayer, 2005: 24). Habituation to an individual's specific place in the structure of social relationships and material conditions creates a corresponding structure of dispositions, which is a manifestation of adaptation. When activated, such dispositions produce actions which tend to reproduce external structures. Most dispositions constituting the *habitus* are relational – they are oriented towards some other individuals and entities. This internalised structure acts partly as a classifying mechanism: it classifies each and every experience: discursive and material objects – people, places, practices, sounds, monuments, fragrances and feelings. The *habitus* is both efficient and economical, using only a small number of distinctive features it classifies not only a wide range of familiar objects but also new phenomena. The *habitus* is thus more generative, flexible and multi-dimensional than mere habit (Bourdieu, 1993: 87, after Sayer 2005: 24). Our responses to the world are mostly at the level of dispositions, feelings and embodied skills. When we are in a familiar context, these dispositions give us a 'feel for the game,' an ability to cope and go on effectively without conscious deliberation and planning (Sayer, 2005: 25). They are, however, not entirely deterministic. In different contexts possibilities and dispositions may or may not be activated. People are reflexive individuals. Sayer thinks the stress Bourdieu puts on the *habitus* draws our attention to subconscious orientations, but, interestingly, ignores a much more conscious aspect of human subjectivity, and also one of the key elements of experiencing class: emotions. Sayer attempts to fill this gap. Yet including the emotional dimension in the concept of *habitus* requires redefining the reason/emotion dualism so rooted in the European tradition. Contrary to popular belief, mind and body are not in opposition, thought and

feeling do not stand in some kind of a binary opposition: "Sentiments such as pride, shame, envy, resentment, compassion and contempt are not just forms of 'affect' but are evaluative judgements of how people are being treated as regards what they value, that is things they consider to affect their well-being. They are forms of emotional reason" (Sayer, 2005a: 947).

Thus, feeling, Kirk notes, can constitute a mode of cognition, of evaluative understanding and engaging with the surrounding reality (2006). He agrees with Sayer that the habitus has a necessary moral dimension: "ethical dispositions develop through socialisation and are not reducible to expressions of mere interest, nor are the norms with which they are associated reducible to mere conventions" (2006). Much of our normative orientation to the world is at the level of dispositions and emotions, indeed not only aesthetic but ethical dispositions can be part of the habitus, acquired through practice as intelligent dispositions which enable us often to react appropriately to situations instantly, without reflection. In order to understand our normative orientation to the world we therefore need to avoid the dualisms of fact and value, reason and emotion, and acknowledge that while emotions and values are fallible, they are not irrational or 'merely subjective' but are often perceptive and reasonable judgements about situations and processes (Sayer, 2005a: 951). Such an adopted point of view may expand the sociological considerations on class, work and identity by the emotional commitment dimension. "Work, while a necessity, can be and very often is one of those practices that people care about. [But the contemporary] [...] [C]ritics who favour the end of work position, for instance, point to the transition in the west from societies of production to societies of consumption (or spectacle). Thus, through re-orientating the individual's sense of self to consumerism, where work is out of the frame and where value and self-respect can be differently acquired, work no longer constitutes the sphere of commitment and vehicle for recognition it once did" (Kirk, 2006 Pt 4.3).

The last statement leads to the question of Pierre Bourdieu's understanding of ethos. The thinker describes ethos as "mortality made flesh" (1933: 86 after Kirk 2006) – a mode of practical knowledge related to the habitus. "In relation to working-class experience, a key

question stands out: what happens to such patterns of understanding [of ethos – author's note] following radical transformation in the social world – more specifically, the world of work – and thus to the shape of people's lives?" (2006: pt. 5.1). Kirk argues that a useful conceptual tool for understanding change in contemporary society in habitus and working-class ethos is adopting as a tool for analysis a notion from Raymond Williams's work: a *structure of feeling*. From this perspective ethos can be seen "as something constitutive of the habitus, relating to guiding principles governing a life (articulated at both an individual and collective level), principles that only become more fully discursive when under pressure" (Kirk, 2006: pt. 5.1). This kind of discourse adopts the form of Sayer's "internal conversation" which in the case of an utterance in the individual speech act, the social event of verbal interaction implemented in an utterance, is described by Raymond Williams as a process of "grasping of this reality through language, which as practical consciousness is saturated by and saturates all social activity, including productive activity" (1997: 37). Such an "understanding can inform narrative analysis of both work-life history testimonies and autobiographical writing, illuminating further those vital moral dimensions of class Sayer's work reveals" (Kirk, 2006: pt. 6.3). According to Kirk, the structure of feeling represents one of the most provocative and productive theoretical insights in the whole of Williams's work. Just for a record it is noteworthy that this most famous and frequently quoted concept of Raymond Williams poses some problems with definition (Kirk, 1999: 44–63). "The very concept itself appears a contradiction in terms," contends John Kirk, "confusing the theoretical terrain rather than clarifying its borders or boundaries" (1999: 44). The term first occurred somewhat casually in *Culture and Society*. Williams used the term on three separate occasions with different meanings each time: first, as an endorsement of something that is apprehended directly, along with the assumption that it is a gift to perform this apprehension; second, as an attribute of the novels of the 1840s; and third, as the equivalent of a negative definition of ideology (false consciousness) (Williams, 1958). In his following book *The Long Revolution*, Williams still did not present a clear articulation of the term, but he only indicated that a structure of feeling is neither universal nor class-specific, and that it is

not formally learned (Zembylas, 2002: 190). "The term I would suggest describing it is a 'structure of feeling': it is as firm and definite as a 'structure' suggests, yet it operates in the most delicate and least tangible parts of our activity. In one sense, this structure of feeling is the culture of a period: it is the particular living result of all the elements in the general organization [...]. I do not mean that the *structure of feeling*, any more than the social character, is possessed in the same way by the many individuals in the community. But I think it is a very deep and very wide possession, possession, in all actual communities, [...]. And what is particularly interesting is that it does not seem to be, in any formal sense, learned... One generation may train its successor, with reasonable success, in the social character or the general cultural pattern, but the new generation will have its own structure of feeling, which will not appear to have come 'from' anywhere..." (Williams, 1961: 48–49). The structure of feeling does not offer any formal systematic beliefs on values (of working-class culture or another), but focuses on change over time, which influences their formation. Above all it is "the deep community that makes the communication possible" (Williams, 1961: 65); that is, the structure of feeling is formed by that deep community, which may or may not be aware of itself. The structure of feeling is a state of unfinished social relations that have not yet found the terms for their own reflexive self-comprehension. This is precisely why Williams uses the word 'feeling' to emphasise a distinction from the more formal concepts of 'world-view' or 'ideology.' It indicates the way of identifying values that are actually lived and felt and the relation between these and formal or systematic beliefs. The notion of the structure of feeling should be understood as a description of the ways in which ideologies reflect emotional investments that remain unexamined during our daily interactions, because they have been woven into what is considered common sense (Zembylas, 2002: 191–193).

The structure of feeling is "a social experience which is still *in process*, often indeed not yet recognized as social but taken to be private, idiosyncratic, and even isolating" (Williams, 1977: 132). Examination of its articulation requires adopting the concept of language as a ceaseless flow of utterance produced in dialogues between an individual and other (not only the concrete, but also Meadows's generalised other)

in a specific socio-historical context. An important part of this process is “the relationship between speaker and listener, speaker and the world, in terms of power and status, individual and group, self and others” (Kirk, 2006: pt. 6.5). Williams created the concept of the structure of feeling for the analysis of literary texts, but “it has a broader use for making sense of cultural forms and formations and as social theory” (Kirk, 2006: pt. 7.1). The narrative becomes a symbolic social act, in which “subjects struggle to articulate shared meanings and feelings at the level of lived experience, speaking a structure of feeling through various modes of address in possible dispute, or dissonance, with dominant ways of seeing the social reality” (Kirk, 2006: pt. 7.5). Guided by this interpretation of the structure of feeling a decision was made to use this concept for the analysis of the fiction originating from post-industrial areas. The emphasis was put on the analytical aspects of the adopted concept, after its author who recommended to pay attention to the characteristic elements of narrative such as its impulse, restraint and tone, “specifically affective elements of consciousness and relationships; not feeling against thought but thought as felt and feeling as thought: practical consciousness of a present kind, in a living and interrelated continuity” (1977: 132). Similarly to Sayer’s considerations, emotions exist within a framework, or structure, articulated as social and personal, the result of intersubjective social relations and processes being captured in the dialogue between an individual and the world, between their emotion and consciousness, in continuing interaction with norms and senses accepted by a given community. The diachronic dimension of analysis corresponds with Williams’s concept, who believed that “no two generations speak the same language.” The constantly occurring differences in the narrative description of the world are connected with new, emerging articulations of reality created by “additions, deletions and modifications” (Williams, 1977: 131). Williams distinguished here a framework of the dominant, emergent and residual elements.

“As a mode of cultural analysis *structure of feeling* provides evidence about the vital, and lived, experiences or attitudes of a group or of a society in a particular period, defining a particular quality of social action, within uneven processes of historical change and continuity”

(Kirk, 2006, pt 7.8). The emergent elements constituting the structure of feeling become accessible to the researcher when ordinary conventions used for articulation of experiences become partly reoriented or totally rejected. The structure of feeling itself does not constitute change, but reflects it, always being part of the process of emergence of new ways of understanding reality and thus accompanying each potential wide-reaching social change. Neither is it a synonym of the culture of a period because its elements are rather precisely those particular elements which subvert the social order, its emergent elements may be, and they often are oppositional to the established hegemony (in the political and cultural sense) (Zembylas, 2002: 195). "This is especially evident at those specific and historically definable moments when new work produces a sudden shock of *recognition*. What must be happening on those occasions is that an experience which is really very wide suddenly finds a semantic figure which articulated it" (Williams, 179: 162). These 'semantic figures' relate to historical and social change and through its description they allow researchers to understand how important such changes are for the studied community's life. Owing to the fact that the structure of feeling is used for identification of senses and values which are lived and felt in a given period, we can treat (and use) it in reference to these peculiar historical and social processes and for the study of a constantly reorienting community. The term structure of feeling defines the continuing interaction between the individual and the social and embodies a structure of past, present and future leading the subject "towards a new way of seeing and/or feeling, resulting in the familiar appearing strange or the strange becoming familiar" (Eldridge, Eldridge, 1994: 140). In such a process social change manifests itself "shaped by actors as it shapes them" (Kirk, 2006, pt. 7.9). In so far as the emergent elements derive from the interaction with a new social and personal experience, the residual elements constitute the remains of the bygone historical process. For example, analysing transformation processes we look for what is dominating in social narrative and what has been inherited in a new form of capitalist culture. "Bourgeois culture [...] is the basic individualist idea and the institutions, manners, habits of thought, and intention which proceed from that" (Williams, 1985: 313). Working-class culture, just the opposite – studied after

years of industry dominance in the examined area, was communitarian in its form. The collective and communitarian elements of the structure of feeling are, from this point of view, residual in the dominating neoliberal individualist culture. Still, using the given example, the dominant elements in the structure of feeling of the post-Fordist society are all those rhetorical figures which are contained within the mainstream of epoch description, representative expression of its constituent processes, representations, which, being disseminated through mass media, scientific and journalistic articles, are among the essential expressions of the society's state of self-awareness. In a certain limited way, the dominant elements may be compared to "false consciousness" in the traditional understanding of Marx's class theory, as they normally constitute a discourse representing the elites' opinions and thus they do not reflect the actual interests and living conditions of the working class.

Representations of Silesia in literature

Silesian literature is determined not only by its geographical and cultural boundaries but is also marked by and vocal about past issues, important not only to the region's identity but also to the development of the language-centred writings (Biliński, 2010: 47). The literature in question, devoted to Silesian social life was created after World War II, and has always been the product of, firstly, the prevailing state ideology, which adopted the form of formalised poetics at the turn of 1940s and 1950s, secondly, the literary and cultural fashions and thirdly, the genuine interest in the region's specificity and the opportunities it offers to an artist – with its complex history and rich mythology. For the purpose of this work we will attempt to introduce a certain order. To start with, the history of Upper Silesia connected with uprisings and revolutions and its relations with the mining community was what Gustaw Morcinek tried to depict in his novel *Pokład Joanny* written in the literary convention of socialist realism. Another prominent theme characterising Silesian literature is labour, around which pivoted the oeuvre of many authors, such as: Leon Wantuła (*Urodzeni w dymach*), Jan Pierzchała (*Dzień nocą na*

trzy podzielone), Albin Siekierski (*Czarne i białe pióropusze*) or Bolesław Lubosz (*Odkrywanie Kolumba*). A particularly important role in the literature about Upper Silesia is also played by family sagas, that is, the convention in which by reference to the region's history it is possible to best render the problems of continuity and change as well as tradition and innovation – with such distinctive works as Jan Baranowicz's *Kurtokowie*, Maria Klimas-Błahutowa's *Drzewo życia* or Jan Pierzchała's *Krzak gorejący*. A highly complex situation of the region after the war, connected with the change in the region's population is presented for instance in Albin Siekierski's *Odchodzące niepokoje*, Aleksander Baumgardten's *Spokojnie z jutrem* or Stanisław Horak's *Ostatni kurs*. A separate position in the region's literature is occupied by the published results of literary contests held respectively in 1948, 1952, 1956, 1961, the purpose of which was to attract the literary community to Silesian problems. Sometimes such contests accompanied the construction of the so-called monuments of socialism, as exemplified by the Huta Katowice metallurgical combine, which was to become the symbol of the communist and Silesian modernity, homage to intensive industrialisation. In the next literary stream much attention was paid to the specificity of the Silesian folklore (with such noteworthy works as *Podania górnicze z Górnego Śląska* in Ligęza's study; *Przedziwne śląskie gadki* by Morcinek; *Baśnie śląskie, Baśnie kwitną na haldach* by Baranowicz). Testimony to a more recent history – the tragic period of the confrontation of the Solidarity Trade Union with the communist government – can be found in the collection of poems devoted to the massacre of striking miners at the Wujek coal mine in Katowice entitled *Zapisani w rachunku krzywd* – (a study by Krystyna Heska-Kwaśniewicz). The problems of the world of work and their relations to the socialist doctrine were predominant until 1989, and along with the renaissance of interest in the ethnical and cultural problems of the region led to the situation in which many of the contemporary literary works devoted to Silesia concentrate on the identity problems connected with the multicultural roots of Upper Silesian culture – at this point it is worth mentioning novels by Feliks Netz (*Urodzony w święto zmarłych*) and Krzysztof Karwat's journalistic opinion writing (*Jak hanys z gorolem*). An analysis of the writing of Kazimierz Kutz and Stefan Szymbutko, presented later in this book, aims to famil-

iarise the reader with the questions tackling the concept of identity of Upper Silesia and its inhabitants. The works of the above paint a panorama of the postindustrial world, show sensitivity to the region's specificity, awareness of the industrial and agricultural past, as well as present a gallery of characters whose stories are inextricably linked with the difficult history of the local communities. The books' protagonists are marked by the characteristics of this passing world with its labour ethos, proletariat roots, Silesian language and communitarian manners. The authors' books also give some flashes of premonition of further events in the depicted reality, in accordance with Milan Kundera's words, who claimed the anticipatory functions of literary works: "The novel dealt with the unconscious before Freud, the class struggle before Marx, it practised phenomenology (the investigation of the essence of human situation before the phenomenologists). What superb 'phenomenological descriptions' in Proust, who never even knew a phenomenologist" (after Ćwikła, 2006: 142). Each of the authors investigates the past, but also the future of the region; nowadays, more than ever before, the question of the Silesian identity and its place in the postmodern, post-Fordist world needs to be raised again.

Part I

Kazimierz Kutz's Writings about Silesia

John Kirk in his work *Classifying Matters* (Kirk, 2007) stresses the role of literature, especially of the novel, in the creation of representations of large social communities. Kirk emphasised that the mid-19th century realistic novel performed many social functions: educational and ideological as well, reproducing the cultural capital: the habitus of particular social classes, especially the bourgeoisie. The classic 19th century literature founded on the literary heritage of such authors as Jane Austen and Walter Scott, expressed rising tensions between class fears, social progress and liberal reforms. Such anxieties were often voiced by proletarian protagonists.

Having read *Classifying Matters* the reader is unable to disregard the category of class as it is the class, middle class in particular, that was to become the main subject matter of the Industrial Revolution writers. It is also worth taking into account such sources as official political and economic treaties, along with literary works. Yet considering the origin of the authors, this *middle class* also 'imposed' a vision of itself and created a conviction on its social mission. The 20th-century literary modernism resulted in the situation where taking an interest in style would lead to the rejection and dissociation from the tastes of the lower classes and the emerging mass culture (cf. Huyssens, 1998; Carey, 1992).

Referring to another English author, David Cannadine, Kirk acknowledges the wide belief "that the British are obsessed with class in the way that other nations are obsessed with food or race or drugs or alcohol. [...] From Marx to Margaret Thatcher, the subject of class – usually in the shape of the working class – has rested like a nightmare

on the brains of the living" (Cannadine, 2000: ix). On the other hand, Kirk says that "class has always been in some significant senses at the heart of what we call literature in the Western world."

However, class as a category of analysis may pose a difficulty, considering how difficult it is to avoid politically burdened connotations. For instance, in the scientific discourse, in the recent cultural, political, legal and sociological theories, one can discern a tendency to remove or replace the notion of class, the working class in particular (Skeggs, 2004). Alternatively, one can use another category proposed by Raymond Williams, defined as a structure of feeling.

As Jenny Bourne Taylor notes, Williams's concept of a structure of experience serves the purpose of specifying how people experience the quality of living in a given place and time (Taylor, 1997). It constitutes a kind of methodological tool by means of which we can learn and understand culture and the changes that occur in it. Richard Hoggart (1957) recalls "personal experiences" of class members as a point of reference of his assertions to prove both the existence and decline of class.

On the one hand, the structure of experience is a kind of strengthened, stable and precisely defined 'construction,' on the other hand, though it happens – says Taylor, that exactly where it manifests itself is the most delicate and difficult to grasp area of human material activity. At the same time Williams wished to avoid associations with any idealisations in the form of such notions as 'the spirit of the times.' This is rather understood as common baggage, their experiences, perceptions and values shared by a generation which are most clearly expressed particularly in art forms. The best exemplification of what the essence of the structure of experience expresses itself in is according to Williams – the industrial novel of the first half of the 19th century (Taylor, 1997).

He also argues that how we feel and experience emotionally various cultural phenomena is influenced by the structuration of the social world we live in. This may be seen from various perspectives, yet only a few of them, however, may be considered noteworthy as being reasonable and valuable. In cultural studies this means emphasising what constitutes the collective feelings, shared by other participants of a given culture.

What does Jan Basista do?

Mario Vargas Llosa, the Nobel Prize winner of 2010, says that “one who writes a novel, writes with the whole of oneself. What comes out of him are the best things and the worst things too. It is what he consciously bears inside and what he had rather did not know. When writing you discover in yourself things you have no idea where they come from, but it is you that they come from: your own complexes, obsessions, fears. Every novel or poem is an autobiography. The sincerer the better. Not just in terms of matters that you have actually experienced but also those that were only desired and dreamt of. An autobiography is not only the truth about a man but also his lies, silences and demons” (Llosa, 2011: 17). Seemingly, these words may be also referred to the debut novel by Kazimierz Kutz, entitled *Piąta strona świata*. Llosa talks about writers and writing in general. He discusses authors who use the novel form to create a world in which they actually place themselves, although they fill up the artistically created reality with a number of characters. This quality can be seen as particularly valid when dealing with novels based on artist’s true experiences, which is exactly the case with Kutz’s book.

In the article “Wszystko, co napiszę będzie prawdą,” Feliks Netz observes that we are only able to infer the profession of Jan Basista, the main character of *Piąta strona świata*, from cryptic hints. “And this is not particularly important (although the fact that Kazimierz Kutz makes him a technician, not an artist, must be significant), the more important thing is what occupies Jan Basista rather than what his occupation is. He deals with Silesia and his Silesian origin, and in this way, Silesia and being Silesian involve his job. This is what he does. Silesia and Silesian origin are his substance and his spirit, his body and soul. Ceaseless, mundane, tireless work that needs a lot of attention and patience that concentrates on where his heart meets his body – this is the true occupation of Jan Basista. This is a minefield where one must step with great care” (Netz, 2010: 14).

Piąta strona świata cannot be reduced to a kind of an author’s report, a description, a characteristic of the culture of Upper Silesia. This literary work may be interesting for a sociologist not only because it is a record of the authors’ observations on everyday life of his contemporaries, his insights into the future of some aspects of the present that interest him, but also a kind of a reconstruction of the historical reality. “Literary production may also, according to the *Encyclopaedia of Sociology*, though such cases are rare, imply cognitively a valuable model of the relationship between the individual and society, an original method of interpretation of social phenomena. The author is then attributed the role of a not fully conscious sociologist. [...] Such investigations may be linked with a belief that literature simply constitutes a different way of identifying society, alternative to sociology” (Łęcki, 1999: 129).

One should not, however, expect the novel to simply provide sociologists directly with material on issues they missed in their research. Although such a dynamic is not absurd, it does not constitute the essential reason why sociologists are interested in literature. As Jakub Karpiński says in one of his sketches, a literary work may be of interest to researchers not necessarily for the reasons literary researchers considered worthy of interest and praise; yet it is the author’s talent that grants us insight into social probabilistics (Karpiński, 1978: 47–48). This way the author fulfils one of his cultural roles, emphasised since the beginning of the

Western civilisation.¹ The author's imagination couples with that of the readers,' inspiring them, putting forward and preserving in them the situations and scenes that over time become part of collective imagination. Consequently, it can disregard facts by generating its own objectified images related to entire communities. Such intersubjectively established and inspiring social imagination images fill up the collective memory. This memory, similarly to philosophical interpretations of reality functioning in the society, have an impact on the course of everyday events in one's life. "The collective memory is a collection of beliefs and ideas about the past that allows the society to understand both its past and its present, and consequently anticipate the future" (Gneciak 2013: 85).

Memory must then be treated not as a reservoir of constant tales about what happened but as a certain dynamic quantity. As such it is subject to modifications which may however result from an intention of a subject who may deliberately introduce some changes, additions and elements that cannot be confirmed and fantastic threads to the images of the past. Reasons for such "reconstructions" may be different. It also sometimes happens that over the course of time it is difficult to separate the truth about the past days from its (inter) subjective vision. In fact, the authors of those very "reconstructions" face this difficulty too. Not to mention that such visions may also result from nondeliberate modifications and distortions of memories.² There is, however, another manifestation of this phenomenon. The image of the past rooted in the collective memory, which influences the perception of the present, is affected by, among others, artists. Writers, film directors, painters tend to admit that the images they present of the events, characters, collectivity or actual cultures, are solely their own interpretations thereof. They do not think there is point explaining, giving excuse for the content of these

¹ In *Poetics* Aristotle deals extensively with poets' tasks, indicating that they should not focus on events that happened and not those that might have happened; they should not avoid talking about what should have happened (see: Arystoteles, 1988: 329–330).

² A similar assumption was adopted within the SPHERE project based on interviews conducted with residents of selected estates of Upper Silesia and Zagłębie where the residents' stories were not treated "as a source of historical documentation but rather as a unique source of individual and collective creation of the past" (see: Gneciak, 2013: 85).

interpretations (which is what they are sometimes expected to do, especially when they refer to historical facts, essential for specific communities). Free of any academic ambitions and not claiming any historical accuracy in depicting the subject matter of their artistic activity, such authors find nothing wrong in diverting from the chronicler's reliability towards the fancy of their own imagination. The results of the objectivization of their writings may, however, be surprising.

(Re)constructed truth

A Silesian writer, Szczepan Twardoch, in one of his journalistic writings recalls a girl recording stories told by participants of the Warsaw Uprising. She wanted to reconstruct the image of the uprising on the basis of the memories of people who in 1944 found themselves on the frontline, in direct combat with the enemy, and who actually suffered physical and emotional injury as a result. “The insurgents whose reports she was recording were totally authentic. After a number of conversations the girl discovered with amazement how unusually coherent the memories were – her interlocutors described the same scenes and events although they fought in different troops and in different districts of the city. When she shared her doubts with her senior boss, in the authentic insurgents’ memories he was able to identify scenes from Andrzej Wajda’s *Canal* (Twardoch, 2014: 55).¹

¹ In addition, it is interesting to note that Kazimierz Kutz assisted Andrzej Wajda during the making of *Canal*. Kutz recalls “Wajda offered me and Jakub Morgenstern assistance in filming, as part of our diploma work. We started to work, fully aware of working for Andrzej. He was too delicate and sophisticated to poke around in this scum, while I did like it. I showed up handling pyrotechnics, I was in the sewers, where Andrzej never went, I organized the exteriors, I smeared everybody with mud and oil. In a nutshell, me and Kuba made all the sewer sequences. When the film was awarded in Cannes we were

An interesting research idea would probably be a wider analysis of the relationship between the collective memory and the content of works in the scope of art and/or pop culture which have exerted (and still exert) their influence on it. The imagination of the masses of receivers of the images yield under an enormous pressure of the mass media feeding the growing audience with a certain vision and knowledge of reality. A knowledge which is simplified, based on selectively (intentionally or through negligence) treated documentary material. Incidentally, the media are quite often deliberately used for this purpose – not necessarily by the propaganda (this word always carries negative connotations) of oppressive political systems. Michał Smolorz wrote: “[g]enerations of the era of real socialism experienced this on an everyday basis, but then we were fully aware of the illusion, every day we crossed the borders of two worlds: the official one created by the government and the real one – at home. But ever those – clearly separated – worlds began to permeate in the course of time and many of us were slowly losing our bearings of what is real and what was made up” (Smolorz, 2012: 5).² This quality of “being made up” seems particularly significant. The very act of making something up does not have to carry any negative meaning. Things may get problematic only when the author considers the result of one’s creation to be a truth fit for dissemination and/or when the readers/recipients get the same idea. And considering this, it turns out that Kutz – Smolorz notes – “has perfectly met the needs of his own folks. Silesians, once full of insecurities and sense of insignificance, for ages living with a desire to merely exist, finally believed that they are the most beautiful community in this part of Europe. That they are hardworking, religious, clean and tidy, simply good and decent. That they have spent ages fighting for Poland. That their culture is unique and one of its kind, and the language despised by strangers

completely forgotten. But it was never a problem for me. Thanks to Wajda, at his expense I learnt a lot about filmmaking. I don’t regret it because he is like that. He is aware of his genius and knows that the true greatness is a contribution from a lot of other people. This is the way it was and always will be in art as a whole (Bartosiaik, Klinke, 2007).

² Michał Smolorz would have exhaustively dealt with the problem of ‘making up’ (inventing) Silesia; thus, whatever we may say here, referring to this creation of the region’s portrayal, our ambition is not to complement those considerations but to provide a comment on the phenomenon.

is the most sophisticated ‘polonicum’ preserved in the poems by Rej and Kochanowski. That their manners have transmitted through generations the highest humanistic values of the modern Europe. And finally, that their bit of the world has no equal and the slag heaps and red brick walls hide an enchanted, eternal beauty, so clearly seen in films” (Smolorz, 2013).

Creating a vision of reality may serve the purpose of showing it in a negative light, or its de-idealisation. There are plenty of articles, novels, films and even scientific works (popular science or quazi-science), the merit of which is debated by both their common and institutional receivers,³ very often trying to interpret them in terms of a distortion of, for example, the historical truth or visions of culture they refer to.⁴

Now what about the proverbial Silesian diligence? Can this phenomenon be deprived of its uniqueness or demystified by making a reference to historical conditions? It is hard to negate, but – maybe – Basista is right when he notices the difference between work out of conviction (and fidelity to principles) and work that results from slave subordination. Jacek Wódz’s response to the question whether Silesian people’s diligence is a fact or a myth, and whether it can be supported by evidence of any efficiency rates, approaches this from a rational angle: “I think it is a myth derived from [...] the mining ethos, caused by several factors, among others, the technological requirements and threats under which, without being hardworking and conscientious, one was risking a disaster. Besides, in the pre-war period

³ Further on the common and institutionalised reception of a literary work see, for example, K. Łęcki, *Zinstytucjonalizowane formy komunikowania o literaturze. Socjologiczna analiza zjawiska Św. Gombrowicz* (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Śląsk, 1997); L. Stetkiewicz, *Kulturowi wszytkożercy sięgają po książkę. Czytelnictwo ludyczne jako forma uczestnictwa w kulturze literackiej* (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 2011).

⁴ Exemplification of this could be the heated debate held on the books by Jan Tomasz Gross: *Sąsiedzi: Historia zagłady żydowskiego miasteczka* (Sejny: Fundacja Pogranicze, 2000) and (co-authored by Irena Grudzińska-Gross) *Złote żniwa. Rzecz o Tym, Co się Działo na Obrzeżach Zagłady Żydów* (Kraków: Znak, 2011) or the books: *Strach. Antysemityzm w Polsce tuż po wojnie* (Kraków: Znak, 2008). The latter was subsequently devoted a collection of polemics: R. Jankowski (ed.), *Cena „Strachu”*. Gross w oczach historyków (Warszawa: Fronda, 2008); some controversies about the way of showing the truth of the Second World War and Holocaust was raised by the German TV serial entitled *Our mothers, our fathers* (orig. *Unsere Mütter, unsere Väter*), shown in many countries, including Poland, produced in 2013 by German public television ZDF.

there was an enormous pressure – while the methods not always humanitarian – to induce such diligence. So this can be termed habitual diligence” (Wódz, 2004).

*

Twenty years after leaving Silesia and starting his studies at Łódź Film School, Kutz returned to his home town looking for an idea to make his own film (see: Serdiukow, 2014). The effect of this “search” was the famous Silesian Trilogy. The director stresses the fact that the content of the pictures was “fiction, most of it was made up. Often on the basis of true events, but not mine, there are no autobiographic threads” (Serdiukow, 1997).

Much later he started to write a book, so far the only novel in his rich artistic output. Its creation took fifteen years. Even though it is not a fictionalized, literal autobiography, the autobiographical threads actually constitute the book’s framework; and even though its main character’s name is not the author’s one, even though the author himself suggests he should not be identified with Jan Basiśta, we are dealing with a rich cognitive material that familiarises the reader with the truth about the region, people who lived here and whose living and somewhat “imitative” memory constitutes the backbone of this culture’s value. Still, it needs to be emphasised, what the reader finds here is not the vivisection of Kutz’s mentality but a look at the region whose culture is tied closely with the identity of its residents portrayed in the novel. Yet there is something that – as the author would see it – seems to be highly specific for art. Quoted earlier Mario Vargas Llosa says that old novels talk about the times in which they were created, not only about what happened, but also what remained for ever in the sphere of wishes of the people living at that time. “Since something did not take place they had to invent such events. This dimension of dreams and unfulfilled attempts of the times is only provided by literature. Neither history nor any social study can give us such testimony” (Llosa, 2011: 17). However, perhaps one is dealing with a different situation when talking about a novel set in the not so distant past or in the reality that is, so to say, quite contemporary and resulting directly from the recent past.

Every generation creates and experiences its own *structures of feeling*, and particular groups may express them in special and forceful ways, the consequence of which may be their expansion in the whole of a given culture. According to Williams, an extremely important role of art and particularly literature is to provide useful hints which help describe and understand the social world (cf. Tylor). Consequently, it is true to say that Kazimierz Kutz's novel is in fact "a praise of and an attempt to define Silesia" (see: Blicharz).

While Kirk and Skeggs touch upon the problems of social classes, Kutz brings regional culture to the fore, in respect to which class seems to be a subordinate category. It constitutes its subordinate set. *Piąta strona świata* is rich in situations in which representatives of various communities (who can be assigned to different classes) unite around the values they all consider fundamental. Such values are closely connected with the culture of their "little homeland." The point is not that the problem of class is non-existent here, it is, however, not the key driving category organizing the work's structure and narrative.

It seems justified to run a parallel between Kutz's novel and Kirk's conceptual framework in order to replace the narrower, as employed here, notion of class with the one of identity resulting from being rooted in the region's tradition. That is why at the heart of Kutz's writing (and this is also the case with most of his oeuvre) is the concept of little homeland. It is also true to say that the concept of little homeland lies at the very heart of what we call literature.

Kutz said that before starting the script for *Sól ziemi czarnej*, the first film from the already mentioned Silesian Trilogy, he was feeling that "Silesia is pushing" him (Klich, 2009: 123). And the only way out of this intense, existential experience was to commit: "I need to tackle it [Silesia]" (Klich, 2009: 123). Perhaps another way of tackling Silesia, this time in terms of literature was the novel *Piąta strona świata*. After over forty years following the first tackling attempt (which was then to be followed by others) the film maker and author carried an even heavier baggage of memories, experiences, reflections and visions of Silesia.

Kutz created prose that is nostalgic and – as is the case with all his work dedicated to Upper Silesia – an artistic "processing," rendering of the regional reality. This very reality is the actual and ultimate

protagonist of his book. We find there a longing for the definitely closed chapters of the Silesian tradition, a clear emphasis on its current and still affirmed strength. But also a bitter conclusion can be drawn about the source and essence of the Silesian mentality, and this is the aspect in which Kutz's depictions of Silesianness differ fundamentally from other famous representations in film and literature.

Silesian ideal

Manuel Castells wrote that “people socialize and interact in their local environment, be it in the village, in the city, or in the suburb, and they build social networks among their neighbours. On the other hand, locally based identities intersect with other sources of meaning and social recognition, in a highly diversified pattern that allows for alternative interpretations” (Castells, 2008: 68). That is why, as Castells says, where somebody sees a community’s revival others notice disintegration of civil society. In the changing external conditions, local cultures confront traditional social, economic or political problems, connected with every day functioning. They also have to face new challenges that are impossible to escape and the overcoming of which depends on many factors that local communities and local governments not always control. These include the problems which ‘descend’ on the region’s residents and which result from the processes that occur far from not only the city, province or national boundaries but also the boundaries of the continent. In view of the growing network of mutual connections between different subjects, the local must face up to the European or global.

This phenomenon does not have to be disastrous for communities distinct from a larger, for example national, whole. Kutz seems to make this point in his book, following Castells, who remarked: “so emerged the paradox of increasingly local politics in a world structured by increasingly global processes. There was production of meaning and identity: my neighbourhood, my community, my city, my school, my tree, my river, my beach, my chapel, my peace, my environment” (Castells, 2008: 68). However, in the case of Silesia the point is not to create but to maintain and sometimes reconstruct identity. The point is not that the Silesians as described by Kutz are allegedly – as Castells put it – “defenceless against a global whirlwind” and thus “stuck to themselves.” Their identity is not “a defensive identity, an identity of retrenchment of the known against the unpredictability of the unknown and uncontrollable” (Castells, 2008: 70–71). One can be tempted to state that by writing his book and presenting it to the wide audience, Kutz presents an identity that has a lot to offer to broader culture, beyond Upper Silesia. It is not about “offensive identity,” but surely one aware of its value, uniqueness, and, consequently, free of complexes. The identity built up not by resounding ceremonies and festive rituals. Although these are also important for emphasising and marking who you are, what matters most are those individually internalised and intersubjectively confirmed cultural characteristics that constitute being Silesian and thus make the characters of *Piąta strona świata* belong to the Silesian everyday life. Clarifying the idea behind one of his most famous films, *Paciorki jednego różańca*, Kutz said that “the true realistic art is about giving something usual, ordinary, a value of specialness and uniqueness. The point is to make the banal sublime” (after: Klich, 2009: 195).

If this is the case, the form of the film story would have to rise over the realism of the mundane, but simultaneously – in order to maintain its creditability – the latter needs to remain its main subject, yet elevated and more sublime, just as the author declared. This may be the reason for the main objections to Kutz’s artistic practice – concerning the inauthenticity of the image of Silesia which he “injected” in the collective imagination and memory: the objection that in order to immortalise the message he accorded its universal qualities, ones that might enhance the levels of nostalgia and give rise to the yearn-

ing of people belonging to different cultures. Therefore, in order to be remembered and stored in the memory of as many receivers as possible it was reasonable to contain “less Silesia in Silesia” in favour of the sublime which usually creates a more pleasing image on the screen than a mere reflection of reality.

Asked about the degree of conscious idealisation of the Silesian reality portrayed in his works, Kazimierz Kutz said he finds it difficult to determine, “but this is not excessively idealised” (Serdiukow, 1997). Yet in reference to the author’s previous statement one may ask him about the angle from which the banal becomes sublime. But then there arises an additional question: when does the sublime stop being real?

When the Kraków-based journal *NaGłos – a journal on literature and other arts* devoted the whole issue to the culture of Upper Silesia (1994), Krzysztof Uniłowski wrote on this occasion: “At one time the *NaGłos* issue devoted to Silesia confused me. It was nice that somebody made a Sisyphean effort to come to grips with the stereotypes of the land of coal and *krupnioki*. Yet I was concerned about the formula proposed by the editors regarding the aesthetization of the Silesian space. [...] The specialists from Kraków are very well aware how to recover Silesia for Polish culture – you need to use the tried and tested mythographic recipe, the same that has been instrumental for a long time in making literature with Polish Borderlands themes successful. Silesia as another mythogenic land, a *teatrum* for new works about the initiation into life or revealing intricate genealogical twists and turns? Silesia as another lost Arcadia? Not only the pre-war Lviv or Vilnius but also Katowice as a place of a difficult coexistence of nations and cultures? I’m not convinced this is a right recipe for success, I am irritated. I find irritating the very fact that what is promoted is a ready-made and used up formula, which – according to the editors from Kraków – will serve the region’s revaluation. And I felt for a while like an Indian from a reservation, who, much to the delight of the tourists from the City of Kraków (they do know how you should look at Silesia and how to write about it) is to put a show of love for these red brick *familok* houses, these coal mine shafts soaring up to the sky, to these slag heaps near the settlement houses. Meanwhile, my everyday life is completely different. The ‘unbearably dirty, gloomy

and grey Silesia' is just *my* Silesia" (Unilowski, 2009: 191).

Elżbieta Dutka notes that the promotion of this issue of the quarterly in Teatr Śląski in Katowice was "an unusual phenomenon" (Dutka, 2011: 32). Krzysztof Zanussi once said that "after watching Kutz's films everybody wanted to be Silesian" (Geremek, Cieślík, 2010). By this he meant the atmosphere that accompanied the reception of the first "Silesian" films by the artist from Szopienice. It was to the promotion of *NaGłos* magazine was another instance when "everybody wanted to be Silesian" (Dutka, 2011: 32).

Talking about the guiding principles the magazine editors followed selecting texts for the "Silesian issue," the editor Jerzy Illg admitted that they were to show "not the Silesia that exists now: unbearably dirty, gloomy and grey, but the Silesia seen through the artists' eyes, preserved in their childhood memories, appearing in dreams to those who had to leave it and in imagination to those who, if still living there, prefer to today's Silesia its vision seen with the inner, imaginative or nostalgic eye, less real but more beautiful" (Illg, 1994: 5). One can remember and show to the outer world the Silesia of which Krzysztof Unilowski wrote, with scientific precision and fidelity towards overwhelming facts, one can talk about the necessity to reform the heavy industry, about the fate of miners forced to face the challenges of restructuring (Faliszek, Łęcki, Wódz, 2001), about infrastructure, education, health and hygiene negligence that needs to be made up for, about unemployment, about the necessity to improve social aid, about civilizational backwardness of those unable to cope with organizing the everyday life of their families, dirty children, misery of the retired, etc. However, the editors and authors of the above-mentioned issue of *NaGłos* decided on a different image of the region. The subject matter of the discussion here is – according to the point editor Jerzy Illg made – "[a] fairy tale Silesia: attractive people immersed in the rituals of work and struggle, thrifty, romantic, proud and natural, a black land of shafts and coal heaps, in which, however, the fundamental values that constitute the family, homeland and a purpose of life are perfectly preserved" (Stachówna, 1994: 279).

Asked if life can be a great idea for a film, Kazimierz Kutz answered: "Everybody's life can be a material for a good realistic film. Maybe

except mine. It is incredible, made up. A film about me would be an untrue story. Just a fairy tale” (Klich, 2009: 232). But yet how different from this “fairy tale” vision of Silesia. Still, aware of the rhetorical nature of the above statement, one might agree that such stories and situations (or entire lives) do happen, as much as an average person would find it hard to give them credit, then why not present (to the same audience/receivers) some idealised situations as real, building up everyday lives of probable characters? It is the artist’s right to distinguish between true and phantasmagorical stories (although phantasmagoria may carry a truth about man) and the receiver’s right to decide what to treat as a fairy tale and what to regard as almost (or literally) a document.¹

¹ Dubravka Ugrešić, a Croatian writer, in one of her essays recalls her disappointment with a story of a man who experienced living in besieged Sarajevo. She wouldn’t believe that the injuries he suffered resulted from a fairly banal (considering the then dramatism of everyday life of this city residents) accident. She held it against him that he did not invent his story to meet her expectations so that she could without doubts regard it as true (see: Ugrešić, 1998: 89). Similarly, it was the case with the above-mentioned film *Kanal* by Andrzej Wajda. French journalists in Cannes (where the film was awarded the *Palme d’Or* wouldn’t believe that he had not invented the film’s scenes that were set in Warsaw’s city sewers). Further on this see: Ćwikła, 2014.

Wake up!

Meanwhile –as Michał Smolorz wrote – Kazimierz Kutz “created his original vision of Silesia, its legend, deliberately glorified its great and uplifting qualities as much as he easily omitted its sins and weaknesses” (Smolorz, 2012: 6). Kutz was not the only one striving, throughout his artistic and public activity, for the popularization of the image of Silesia as a land inhabited by tough, hard-working people characterised by a sense of dignity stemming from the power of tradition, faith and work ethos. Yet it were his films that to a greatest extent contributed to building this collective ‘knowledge’ about Silesia. The moving picture almost as a form of a documentary on the culture of the region and its people consolidated as early as following the first screening night of *Paciorki jednego różańca*. Michał Smolorz recalls: “[a]t that point the enthusiasm was widespread everybody acknowledged that the artist’s vision is at the same time the binding cultural model that is indisputable” (Smolorz, 2013). Yet, a self-critical confession follows that “we were seduced by the artist’s vision which does not stick to the reality” (Geremek, Cieślík, 2010). Kutz is thus facing the charge of succumbing more to idealisation when making his films than he could and would admit. Yet even if in Silesia (the ‘real’ Silesia) one can find numerous cases of families in which

relationships look completely different than those in the movies; and even if sociologists manage to explain such discrepancies pointing to the essence of the functioning of individuals and communities in Upper Silesia in the context of various socio-economic and cultural conditions (also writers are marvellously good at describing the latter) – a certain dose of idealism or romanticisation should not be utterly condemned. Everything depends, as was already mentioned, on the intention the artist is driven by – whether they want the ideal to completely cover the real world or rather make it complementary, an addition. As Zbigniew Kadmubek observes: “Someone can say that the multi-cultural and harmonious Silesia [...] as an idyllic land is a sheer myth. And yet we must remember that many generations before us have lived and breathed this myth, half consciously, half not, building on and reinforcing it. There is no use negating it. And myths? They come true once in a thousand years. One example of this is the recently celebrated fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the state of Israel. Myths may be converted into tanks but also lemon plantations, although it is not easy” (Kadmubek, Kunc, 2007: 208).

Kutz says he has always wanted to “make good, intelligent films which will have a lasting presence in people’s memory,” adding: “I was never into crap. I wanted to make films for a purpose, create works that will not fade. The importance of my films is increasing in the sense that they do not stand for opinion journalism, cheap propaganda but are accomplished artistic works” (Serdiukow, 2014). In one of his interviews Kutz clarifies precisely making films “for a purpose” means for him, explains the sense of a mission he had to undertake, not just in the context of artistic activity but in general as a public person, a man of the media, a public life commentator and a politician: “[m]y work boils down now only to lifting Silesian people. [...] Look, although I say nasty things about Silesians without beating about the bush, they still want to vote for me” (Bartosiak, Klinke, 2007).¹

Thus Kazimierz Kutz turns to those who – he is convinced –

¹ It is noteworthy that there is a mention in the interview of the 2007 parliamentary election during which Kazimierz Kutz won an MP mandate running for the Parliament as a Platforma Obywatelska candidate, winning 113 280 votes. In 2014, he was running for the European Parliament as a candidate supported by the Europa Plus coalition, he received 20 426 votes but did not get the mandate of a Polish MEP.

just need being “lifted.” In a way he may be compared to convicted Socrates addressing his compatriots in his famous, articulate *Defence*. One may say that – as the author of *Piąta strona świata* seems to argue – Silesia, like ancient Athens, is not aware of its brave spirit and of the potential of the people living there for generations and they should be reminded of how great and unique the region’s culture is. “Silesians must be shaken, they must be awakened” (Ciszak 2010) – he says. The artist here assumes the role of an ancient sage who, as opposed to Socrates’s declaration, does not hide behind the maxim “I know that I know nothing.” Yet not unlike the Greek philosopher, the filmmaker, in a somewhat self-righteous fashion characterises himself and his work in the following words: “it is not going to be easy to find somebody else, a similar one, because I was – to put it more facetiously – sent to you by a god, just like a thoroughbred, a big but slothful horse is given a horsefly stimulating it to do the necessary exercises. It seems to me that a god sent me to you as somebody who stimulates, convinces and reproaches anyone who is slacking off all day. It will not be easy for you, gentlemen, to find somebody like me” (Plato, 1992: 30a).

Nonetheless, Kutz the writer is not the same “storyteller of Silesia” as Kutz the filmmaker. Without any loss to his shine, the Silesian pearl in the Polish crown, when seen with the novelist’s eyes appears from a yet another perspective. All accusations aside, be them of excessive idealism or, contrarily, exaggerated realism, his literary work certainly contains much more Silesian than Polish spirit.

Years after he made his famous Silesian films, when he decided it was high time, Kutz turned again to his reservoir of memories but this time its different segment. It turned out, however, that the truths these conveyed proved significantly less culturally universal.

A patriarchal matriarchy

Piąta strona świata cannot be accused of idealisation to the extent Kutz's films can. His literary work is characterised by fidelity to tradition which decides on the sense of belonging of its characters and is one of the most important factors shaping their identity and local patriotism. But there are also things his films do not depict, the small things the tradition consists of, which makes even the characters that detract from tradition yield to it in the end: the mundane in each of its dimensions. What is also of great importance here is a community of the settlement, quarter and city dwellers but, first of all, a family. In one of his interviews Kutz said: "Silesia has always been terribly dirty. *Familoki* or houses in which Silesians lived were incredibly clean. Every week things were cleaned, washed, polished – it was the women's self-defence against the dirt. They wanted to create decent living conditions, home was like a sanctuary. They would close themselves off from all sorts of misfortunes – evil, dirt, diseases, Germans, Poles – within their family (Serdiukow 1997). Work always came along with the family.

One of the most important messages Kutz was working to communicate in his "Silesian" oeuvre was the importance of work and its ethos for the local people. He explains: "Work poses the highest

value for a Silesian. It is not Piłsudski's or Dmowski's tomb but work. And faith in justice. This is the field for man's obligation towards the family – hard work and fair payment in exchange" (Kutz, 2014). However, over time, which the researchers are already pointing to, there is a changing tendency. From functioning as something that accompanies and supports the family, work is increasingly being considered its rival. The book *Świat społeczny Ślązaków*, a report from an academic research on the consciousness of the region residents, argues that the importance of work is highest amongst older Silesians "as the respondents grow older [...] [the family] is put on the back burner and of primary importance starts to be the relationship with work" (Łęcki, Wódz, K., Wódz, J., Wróblewski, 1992: 58–59).

But the social landscape emerging from Kutz's novel happens to combine both qualities. Summoning the passing nostalgic Silesian values, ideas and images, Kutz says: "Everything here has its place: the hard-working men, the awaiting women, the elderly puffing a pipe and basking on the bench in front of the house, the children running around with the 'flat skin', even the unemployed" (Klich, 2009: 149). In *Piąta strona świata*, the family is still not threatened as the absolute top of the hierarchy of important elements of individual and collective reality. The role it plays in the book, as well, cannot be overestimated. The image of the family, however, is not the same as shown by Kutz before, for instance in his film *Perła w koronie*. There the wife cleans her husband's feet, bathes him, feeds him and generally tends to somewhat diminish herself in recognition of his enormous effort made every day in the mine. In reference to this scene, Michał Smolorz wrote: "There appeared surprising arguments about, for example the symbolic, nearly biblical scene in which the wife cleans the feet of her husband who has returned from work. Eager experts of the regional truth argued that it is "an awful fake as each man would always get back home from the mine having already had a bath" (Smolorz, 2013). But in Kutz's vision it is an element of this "idealisation," perhaps craved by many a Silesian, but which – as Smolorz insists – has nothing to do with reality as in the traditional Silesian family matriarchy was the established order and a man had in fact nothing to say.

The very strength of matriarchy is one of the novel's more conspicuous elements. For example, Kutz writes about a grandmother

instilling in her grandchildren a respect for knowledge and love of reading. It is her, as the narrator recalls, who instilled the belief in how important it is to observe the rules and respect what is sacred. Jan Basista characterizes his grandmother Anna in the following words: “She – in every inch biblical – hated sin. [...] Everybody was in awe of her. Ever since I remember, every time I met her I felt fear” (Kutz, 2010: 117). But the main character of the novel manifests a peculiar attitude to his mother. A similar one can be found in the filmmaker’s actual biography. “Marianna, a resourceful and bossy mother: did everything without a fuss, but on a temporary basis” (Kutz, 2010: 208) – says Basista.

Aleksandra Kunce tries to explain multidimensionally this particular practical and symbolic role of a woman in the Silesian home: “the home-woman, home-mother relationship – Kunce writes – seems as dominating a symbolic thread as the home – sanctuary, home – space, home – bread, home – tree relationships. The home, being one of our culture’s ‘keywords’ and thus becoming an image of everything that exists, brings together the woman’s experience of existing within its space. And *à rebours*, the woman – treated as a creator of culture – combines the experience of the home and of her being in there” (Kadłubek, Kunce, 2007: 90).

It is not, however, possible to say that the role of the father has been deliberately diminished here. He actually “came home, had dinner, had a nap as the privilege of the man of the house. During that time a bunch of sons tiptoed around him and the grandmother guarded him, anyone chuckling would get sloshed with a wet towel because the nap of the head of the house on Sunday was a sacred thing as if it was the pope who was napping” (Kutz, 2010: 70). This scene is consistent with portraying the essential role of a woman as that of a primary guardian of family peace. The concern about the peace and quiet of the sleeping father was not supposed to stem from fear of the anger of a suddenly waken father but from respect to his rest. Thus it reflects neither any particular insistence on the patriarchal order nor, contrarily, willingness to undermine the man’s position in the family. The importance of the traditional division of roles manifests itself among others in certain characteristic circumstances. Let us take a look at a telling excerpt in which the narrator talks about his fa-

ther: “Everything rested on my mother’s shoulders as he did not show false ambitions of any sort, either pedagogical, authoritative or any other. He gladly gave in to my mother and when he went sober he was embarrassed and nice as none of the two of us. He never beat us. My mother would talk him into using physical force for months and it was not until a few years later that he climbed to the heights of a banal fatherhood and he did it, first of all in order to get even with my mother, not that much out of his concern about his authority as the head of the house” (Kutz, 2010: 84).

However, as it turns out, the ‘getting even’ thing proceeded in a very peculiar way: “So there came the day, one special for us and our father: we took this beating, or as *my mum would have it* [PĈ’s emphasis] – “*smary*”. Our father locked himself in with us in the bigger room, pale with concern, tore his belt off the loops, sat down on the chair, took my elder brother over his knees and got down to the beating business. We burst out crying, but he never got that far as to take me, because at the very first cry Heniek gave he cracked, dashed to the door, turned the door key and sat down with us on the floor. He huddled each of us and we wept together. Next, he apologised and explained that this Old Democracy – he called our mother so in anger – made him do it, which we thought sounded dangerous and sinister” (Kutz, 2010: 85).

Janek Basista looks back with regret that his father never took care of him nor his brother. That is why he recollects the belting very fondly, not unlike those few other moments together, when his father taught his sons some workout moves or flew a kite in the wind. “The older he got the less time he devoted to us” (Kutz, 2010: 85). In one of his interviews Kazimierz Kutz yields to his old inclination to idealise and distinguish Upper Silesia by presenting noble qualities of the region’s residents as if having such qualities was reserved only to them, inaccessible to people from other regions of the country or the world. And so, regarding the husbands and fathers (working of course in coal mines or steelworks), he says that “Silesians treated family duties, like all their obligations, very seriously. They wanted to secure their children’s wellbeing. That is why they were slaving away, severely exploited, from morning to night. They would get home absolutely exhausted; hardly ever could they offer their children something like

time or care. Sometimes on Saturday or Sunday, but all the energy was spent on work" (Serdiukow, 1997).

That is why "the person who made this a home, provided the warmth, the sense of a community was the woman. It was about a sense of unity but also making this existence last. Passing it from generation to generation, make it take its course. It was up to the woman and the way she brought up her children, things she instilled in them" (Serdiukow, 1997).

The situation of a Silesian woman (mother, wife, housewife) may also be regarded from another perspective, one complementary to this traditional "woman-home" relationship. Kuncce interprets it in terms of *gender*, warning, however, that "it is a dangerous trope actually. It makes the womanhood sublime and exposes it. Because exposed is the cultural gender's attachment to the mythologised biological gender, constructing the grand edifice of the prison of womanhood, which, thinking of taking care of the home, settlement and stability, fulfils and contributes to imaging the fortress, the cage, the closet, the palace, the garden, the world, the whole and the border. It summons the order, but also what is digested, disguised in twisted forms. It manifests the truth and a puppet show. This constant coupling present in the idea of home and womanhood is strongly present in the Silesian space. The mental space filled by the tropes of the mother, matron, guardian, organizer, ruler, nurse is an important thread of the patriarchal space in economic and political terms. It is also an important thread of the culturally matriarchal space, where the woman - strong and stable, establishes the rules, keeps an eye on the finances, conducts the home rhythm. Of course, she does this in the guise of diminishing her own significance" (Kadlubek, Kuncce, 2007: 90).

Wretched mentality

Silesia is not only the sublime. What we mean is not only that the novel houses characters as flamboyant as they are morally ambiguous or simply sinful. What demands certain emphasis is that even if the blameworthy acts or reprehensible attitudes in life of the Silesians presented in the novel stem from their desire for freedom, from their erroneous understanding of the idea of making one's own fate, we are still dealing here with socially harmful individuals. On the other hand, it happens that those who get out of line, break the human and divine law, have an unusual mythogenic potential. It is their biographies that stories are based on, to be then spread by word of mouth during informal meetings of neighbours, at fairs or on a journey – these usually favour building the unity of a community which this “cursed hero” was related to. Such stories and the atmosphere they build up bind a given community, just like the ancient tales of highwaymen kindling imagination and taking (over time, after the proper verification through the community's moral code) the form of a collection of values creating and inducing a kind of nostalgia or caution.

“There were many strange people here – Basista says – because constant unemployment is like a downpour, it wears strange chan-

nels within people. Like this Lebel, who begot twelve children, lived with them in terrible poverty, it was so bad that when he went to work, if only he found a job – he went barefoot, but despite all this he kept a monkey in the attic because it was his dream. He would buy it oranges, but he would always badmouth it because it did not eat the oranges, it kept on shaking instead” (Kutz, 2010: 23–24).

Another example of the character or fate ‘strangeness’ could be the history of the protagonist’s grandfather. We do not know much about whether he finally became the hero of the stories that go beyond the family circle. But even if their reception was reduced only to families, then, considering their usual large number of children (Jan Basista’s father had twelve brothers and a sister) and multi-generationness, it involves quite a numerous group of receivers which, in addition, was on the increase.

“It is a strange forefather – the narrator remembers Wawrzek’s grandfather – he keeps going out of nomination because he gave up the land, hated the coal mine and killed two people. I cannot understand him, but perhaps he may have felt a greater need for freedom than others and he responded with resistance to the urgency of the change from the peasant’s yoke to the workman’s toil? He may have been aware of the first modern trespasser who got suspended between the farm and industry, the land and the coal mine, hanging in the air refusing to change himself and his work into a commodity? That is why he kept kicking frantically as he would not be made a workhorse? The Prussian War deprived him of his father and the coal mine took his only friend. Perhaps the death of his nearest sowed in him the hatred for Germans and coal mines, and the double murder of one gendarme – by killing and simultaneously drowning him – was just getting even? Did the need for compensation guide his life, and growing to revenge become his inner drive, that gave him strength, courage and authority among people? Was this what made him different from them? Anyway he was the first in the neighbourhood to take the fight all by himself against the invasion of capitalism and Germanism, which meant the same here as ever since Bismarck, the first modern ruler of Prussia, these two things had entwined and taken the form of a truly black slavery” (Kutz, 2010: 66). Here another type of sublime emerges. The sublime that is foreign to the rowdy and does

not meet the stereotype of a Silesian as a synonym of strength and independence; it interferes with the myth of a Silesian imperturbably struggling for freedom treated as an absolute value.

The truth (or Kutz's idealisations thereof) about the role of work, tradition, principles, love for freedom and family should be supplemented with its "flip side." In fact it is supplemented in equal part by both Kazimierz Kutz himself and Jan Basista.

And being a great advocate for Silesia, demanding credit for the uniqueness of its culture against the backdrop of other regions of the country (and not only), in his novel Kutz draws our attention to the fact that even if what Silesians do lacks the already mentioned sublime aspect, if they are sometimes weak and helpless, if they are unable or unwilling to fight for "their cause," if they are treated as less valuable than others (and what is worse – they feel they actually are) then the reason why they manage to accept themselves with this peculiar deficit is precisely their Silesian mentality. The artist goes against his inclination here and warns, almost shouts at his compatriots about what he once refused them, this very mentality which was to become, as he put it, the Silesian curse.

Talking to Luiza Ostalowska, he said: "I really hate this Silesian mentality. It is too slavish, too submissive. Silesians seem to have lost their rebel instinct and I think that a man's primary duty is to rebel when necessary. I made these films to remind them that they were not born yesterday and that they used to have guts to act like that" (Kutz, 2013).

Are the previously glorified Silesian heroism, tenacity and determination in achieving goals rather episodic examples in a quite unattractive and grey everyday life of the residents of this region? Did the artist ever think there can really be a community where struggle, sacrifice and defiance are inherent in the order of its existence?

This peculiar impotence, an inability affecting people who cannot imagine plucking up courage to rebel in the hope of improving their situation has its sources which must be uncovered to make Silesians aware of them in order to motivate them do act. Certainly, today it is not the point historically in which such acts be heroically exceptional as much as for example during the Silesian uprisings. The challenges are different now. From a certain point of view they are more difficult

because they require mobilising people to muster up some civil energy, which is always linked to one's self-esteem.

The roots of this "Silesian inability" divesting life of its sublimity, must be traced – as Janek Basista explains – in history, because Silesians had not always been so bad off. The past looked different: "if you looked into somebody's face everybody looked as if he had just left a bloodbath only to take a breath and after a moment or two rejoin the rabble. It was when Silesian *d u m b n e s s* started, as their murderous work left them speechless. As from the generation of my forefather the massive transformation of peasants into workers started due to Prussian discipline, poking with gendarme shooters and German speech which was introduced to schools and offices. The authorities deprived people of everything that naturally belonged to them including the language, it was cut down and annihilated. This way they killed intelligence in people, if we agree that this is what a man himself knows best. Thus their humanity was reduced to the level of workhorses. The worst thing about this hazing was the German rigour [...] because they cleared and removed not only stretches of fields, meadows and forests but basically human souls, the souls of those who had cultivated the lands for ages. Many of them got mentally stuck in the industrial shock and so dumbfounded that they submitted meekly" (Kutz, 2010: 66–67).

But Basista/Kutz finds the term dumbness not adequate enough to render what he considers "the immanent Silesian quality. It is not strong enough. One may not react to the accusation of 'dumbness' or may respond indecisively, not categorically, with a mere shrug or eventually – by reducing contacts. And Kutz (together with Basista) wishes to induce a definite reaction. It is not just being outraged that he is talking about, it is a kind of a positive "anger," which makes the outraged throw themselves into action: "On the one hand, sharp, sometimes brutal language was my layer of protection – he explains. On the other hand, it is also something that is supposed to express outright what people do not wish to hear. I talk for myself and express myself straightforwardly, others only *mumble*" (Ciszak, 2010).

As it turns out, Jan Basista is also convinced that sometimes one must use a riper language where 'dumbness' seems to be a childish term. Then he makes use of another one, referring to linguistic tradition:

strong enough to make the media notice it; clear enough to provoke direct associations, degrading enough to make a Silesian's enemies laugh, sharp enough to offend Silesians, provocative enough to make them decide to react; challenging enough to respond with ambition, vulgar enough to ensure its public existence, motivated enough to be cited by scientists, controversial enough to find advocates and ripe enough to make laugh those who are indifferent. Picking and choosing the right word the author found "assness," which stands not only for 'dumbness' but – as it seems – its next, higher degree.

Both the author and his *alter ego* stress their belonging to the community to which they turn. They want us to remember that they are part of it (the difference is that in the case of Basista it is impossible to forget it). Here Silesians denote the "unity." This ethnic and cultural category includes the region's residents related to his culture – both those who are well-deserved for the region and the anonymous, mediocre individuals. "In my opinion – says the novel's protagonist – Korfanty was too clever for the late Poland's requirements but sucky as well, just like all of us natives" (Kutz, 2010: 163). What we see here is, as Michał Smolorz put it, Kutz's "'theory of Silesian assness,' being a quality which has been determining the Silesians' failures in their struggle against history for at least 200 years" (Smolorz, 2010). Again, but how differently comparing to the times when he created his "Silesian trilogy," the filmmaker assumes the role of someone who admonishes and points out mistakes: "I once of Silesians that they are half-assed – he says – How pissed off they were at me. [...] A true artist must tell people what they don't want to hear" (Ciszak 2010). Having said these words he then wonders if what they heard is exactly what he wanted to say: "I didn't mean to offend them – he explains – I just wanted them to see how submissive they are and finally make them do something about it" (Ciszak, 2010).

A similar tone of statement might serve as an argument that Kutz has come to terms – as Smolorz suggested (in his own style) – with the role of the Old Testament prophet, or even aspiring for the "position of a messiah" (Smolorz, 2010). However, democracy sometimes forces the tribunes of the people to also adopt different approaches. If the people are told once (in the hope that they appreciate it) what they do not want to hear and no expected reaction follows,

then on another occasion one must resort to speaking in terms of what these “public listeners” are longing for. But even then, it is easy to miscalculate.

Somebody can always ask: “why have you called Silesians half-assed?” But is it any good to reply “[b]ecause they are half-assed. Myself included.”¹ Is it always worth it to cry: “My name is Legion, because there are many of us” (see: Tomaszewski, 2014)? Even if the author simultaneously explains “the point is not the wording but the function of the word. [That] Assness is not an innate quality but something injected in the mentality of Silesians who for generations were forced into submission, meekness, withdrawal. And they respond poorly to today’s reality. My offence was aimed at pissing them off, making them do something. And this is the very assness, not in the sense that someone’s ass is low or that he cannot count to three. This is a higher rank thinking and I think the majority understands it” (see: Tomaszewski, 2014).

Also, the truth is that some people understand it differently though. It turns out that this apparently Silesian flaw may be treated as a particularly Silesian virtue. The hero of the article published in the Rybnik-based periodical “Nowiny” talks outright about his way of understanding assness: “I’d like to excuse Silesians a little because as Christians, civilized people with a peaceful attitude, they can see an opportunity for a free country in actions in line with the law rather than wars and nonsensical bloodshed” (Salamon, 2014).

This interpretation, a noble excuse for a lack of decisive actions, might serve as an example confirming that it is true to point out the “Silesians’ inclination to ‘close up’ and their tendency do turn their back on reality” (Tomaszewski, 2014). All of this yet is supposed to change for the better: social and economic transformations will not allow, the artist argues, to exist. “We must learn. We are no longer getting ready for work in a coal mine” (Tomaszewski, 2014).

Smolorz scornfully compared Kutz’s opinion about “Silesian ass-

¹ J. Tomaszewski, *Kazimierz Kutz: zaprzyjaźniłem się z Palikotem*, article placed on the MM portal (My City) Silesia: <http://www.mmsilesia.pl/243740/kazimierz-kutz-zaprzyjaznilem-sie-z-palikotem> (accessed: 29.06.2014); Kazimierz Kutz’s responses come from a meeting with Silesia residents held in spring 2009.

ness” to “an established sociological theory,” scoffing at the same time that it has nearly achieved the “position of a paradigm” and that “there is no longer any lecture or a paper on Silesian Theory that does not reference this theory” (Smolorz, 2010).²

*

Piąta strona świata (2010) also touches upon one of the most important issues influencing shaping culture in this part of Europe. It is about the issue in question is multiculturalism and ever-present influences and clashes with Polishness, historical links with the Czechs and with anything German. The product of such a “mix-up” is Silesianness as a unique quality. It is, however, important to note that this original value is not a mere sum of the mentioned constituents. It is true that these had (some of them still have) a great influence on it. Nevertheless (as well as for this reason) one can talk about “Silesianness” as a quality. A quality which made use of and grew as a result of contacts with the neighbouring cultures, when the blending of their elements was reciprocal and voluntary, but also partly in effect of suffering and surrender to the imposed dominance that could not be resisted.

A particular role in this context is played by the Silesian-Polish dynamics; particular, but – as a result of the said Silesian specificity – ambiguous. Basista mentions the specific understanding of Polishness he, his friends and other Silesians like them had. This specificity results from the fact that being primarily Silesian, this was the perspective from which they perceived their own Polishness. “We exercised thinking – we read in Kutz’s novel – and not in accordance with the sentimental emotionalism, as we should not wrestle with Poland, but grow into it, develop for it in order to serve it in due time” (PŚŚ: 107). But even if the road to Polishness leads through Silesianness, it does not seem to be a route free of any bumps. In 1992, Kutz was

² It may be exemplified by a statement by the leader of Silesian Autonomy Movement, Jerzy Gorzelik: “If we want change we must get out of this shell of ours in which we as Silesians have been stuck and if we succeed, in which and I firmly believe we will be able to triumphantly, solemnly announce the end of the Silesian assness” (see: Pawlenka, 2010).

invited to his home town Szopienice for the ceremony of the 70th anniversary of the transferring of Upper Silesia to the Republic of Poland. "It is inappropriate to refuse – to author wrote to his mother at that time – because it might pose some symbolic importance for them. Everybody is looking for some kind of identity, and so are the towns and if one can somehow support their efforts – it is inappropriate to refuse. [...] Although the ceremony itself seems problematic and the whole Polishness might not be something Silesians would be particularly happy about, but it is worth recollecting on" (Klich, 2009: 264).

Sharing the experiences from his flamboyant life, the novel's protagonist talks about situations that did not let him forget about his place of origin. The point is not that he needed such "reminders" because of some periods of the weakening of his bonds with the native land. In fact, he never had any problem with that. Just the opposite, as proved, so to say, by the genuine biography of Kazimierz Kutz. Yet the problem of a sense of belonging, which crops up in this respect in the book, concerns a slightly different matter. It is about the 'defective' Silesianness, in which Silesians were made to believe, being treated as inferior, second-class people. We have already mentioned the "dumbness" imposed on Silesians that concerned Basista so much. But also those who did not live their lives reduced to mere cheap labour either for objective reasons resulting from temporal, geopolitical conditions (because they were born for example in the 'better' times) or as a result of the ambition that enabled them to break free from the specific regional and cultural burden, despite being educated and cosmopolitan, still had to face this unwanted heritage, of which they, whether they liked it or not, were the bearers. The novel makes this fact, the mark this descent left on everyone, very clear.

Basista notes that one can always come across somebody who at the least expected moment will point out his Silesian origin. To be precise, not in order to emphasise his uniqueness resulting from belonging to a particular, valuable culture, but – by way of this observation – to humiliate him. Silesianness – Kutz notes – happens to be something one can point out to a Silesian. At least in order to make oneself feel better in comparison with others. Such animosity between nations, ethnic groups, city dwellers and even neighbourhoods of

the same agglomerations becomes most devastating in the individual dimension. Especially when personal, intimate matters are at stake. Then what belongs to the macro domain of the social, what is influenced by a multigenerational tradition and sources often difficult to rationalise, necessarily translates onto micro-scales, to the level of an interpersonal relationship and individual emotions and experiences. As an example we can use here the novel's relationship between Jan Basista and Alicja:

"We were ready for a deeper relationship, but it happened. She left me overnight under her family's pressure, especially her brothers', two boys who amount to nothing more than having a bath in a bathtub, nylon-style simpletons out of former fashions. They found out where I was from and forbade her to hang around with the 'German boor.' This is how they called me. They passed a familial act she had to follow because – as it turned out – on top of that they were blue-blooded, although they all worked in a shipyard. I felt then as if I was a non-native *goról* who wants to wed a native *kormel* girl. I suffered this split, I have been through a lot, but I kept cool because I got used to contempt because it is the nuisance part of our Silesianness. I also have pride, apparently soft, raised by my forefathers' hard work. [...] Today that memory makes me feel sentimental, but at that time I really felt a misfit – like an Indian" (Kutz, 2010: 33–34).

However, similar situations are not reason for a departure from Silesianness. Suppressing its externality may motivate to the strengthening of its essence and lead to its even greater cultivation. It also happens, in certain circumstances, that a complex transforms into empowerment, lending one a sense of a peculiar inner triumph:

"When Alicja became the past, I regarded these experiences as my better, positive memories because they fell for my impeccable Polish which I did not try to master until after I turned eighteen. At that time, in Gdańsk and Tczew, I used the literary language perfectly well, which is not as easy as it might seem at first glance. The idea or rather the basic problem lies not in the lexis – as it is scientifically called – because one can always learn individual words. The Polish ones are lengthier, more elaborate than the words in the Silesian dialect, which is a more primary layer, beautiful, full of old music and unusual sounds drained from our land from whatever grows and

stands there. The difficulty in acquiring the pure Polish language is connected with the melodies of our dialect. Somebody who is tone deaf will never learn to speak good Polish because in this case being musical means not just learning a melody but being able to get rid of your own one. But Silesians are musical and I do not predict major problems in the future. Then in Tczew I spoke Polish without the local droning. Even in an alcoholic daze I babbled all right. This ability of mine, of which I was proud – was named in Alicja's family 'intolerable deception.' While this was my victory!" (Kutz, 2010: 33–34).

'Deceived' was how those who treated language as one of the elements of the world categorisation felt. So far (they thought) they were able to determine a stranger by means of the way he spoke. In Kutz's case language proved to be the only criterion by virtue of which they could recognise his otherness. He fulfilled the remaining criteria perfectly. However if he camouflaged so well in this seemingly open field the others remain a secret then. This situation indicates the role which is attributed to language by those who need to make the social reality orderly and use this very tool to this end.

Since people outside the region define Silesians on the basis of the language they use, Silesians themselves demand they could – according to the language distinction – define themselves too via the language. Therefore, among others, there were postulates to recognise the Silesian dialect as an official separate language. "They say there is no Silesian language – says Kutz resentfully – now tell me, how come could Silesians communicate for such a long time?! In sign language, bloody hell?! This is a beautiful, living, true language" (Ciszak, 2010).

However, language does play a particular role in the development and strengthening of the sense of cultural identity. In the relationship with the Poles who used and still use the literary Polish (and are not familiar with the dialect vocabulary and characteristic dialect melody), the language was usually what 'exposed' a Silesian. But, on the other hand, it also allowed the Silesian natives to distinguish any intruder amongst them. Because if we reverse the situation, the dialect becomes a kind of a passport to the Silesian world, closed to people from the outside. It gives access to a peculiar *sacrum*. The 'fellow believers' of the true Silesianness are identified as being stigmatised

by *ślōnska gödka*. There are many examples one can give to illustrate this. One of them concerns the well-known and respected Silesian photographer, Arkadiusz Gola. In an interview he gave as part of the SPHERE program research, he divulges an advantage he takes in his work:

“In 90% of situations I find [...] the dialect helpful. I was born in Kochłowice and the dialect is my first language, I learnt to speak Polish as second. I can speak Polish on a regular basis, but when somebody speaks to me in the dialect I respond in the dialect too, automatically. In such environments, in such places the dialect is spoken by 90% of people. When the people see a tall bearded guy approaching them with a camera they start to feel like ... not really fear but a kind of resistance. When I approach somebody I never take a photo without asking or talking to the person. First, I talk to the people. But I am viewed in a completely different way when after being asked a question in the dialect I reply in the dialect too. And the communication starts immediately. Then a question soon appears: where am I from, why am I doing this and so on. And we just talk. I can talk to them freely using the dialect. And it is not a fake dialect because it is really bad if you try to talk using a dialect when you actually do not know how to use it. On top of that you can even get a fist in your face for deceiving. I would not advise this to anyone. If you don't know it, you'd better not try because it might have the opposite effect. Thanks to this, I win their sympathy there, and even if it is not sympathy I get at least something like ‘right, he's not going to chat with us.’”

In Kutz's novel, while Silesian culture is at the heart of its content, the dialect plays the role, so to say, of its original hero who makes the content acquire a deeper dimension. The point is not only that the author used the “Silesian language.” It has its place and sometimes makes up quite extensive extracts of the text, but it is not a language a reader unfamiliar with the dialect should be afraid of. The dialect does not play as big a part as Zbigniew Kadmubek sees it.

Being not the language in which the whole novel was written, Kutz's dialect is to introduce the reader to the peculiar atmosphere of this remote world. Basically, the novel was written in literary Polish. Nevertheless, the author would insert words, sentences and para-

graphs written in the dialect. As if he did not wish the reader (which would be to the clear detriment of the reception) to momentarily lose their consciousness of the Silesianness of the depicted problems. But, as one would have thought, this way the author, paradoxically, appeals to the wide public. The reader, an exclusive Polish speaker, due to, among others, the coherence of a situation's significance and style, may place the universality of everyday wisdom in the regional specificity and discover a colourful diversion of the general truth resulting from this local reality that appears like a fairy tale to those outside the circle of Silesian culture. At the same time, a Silesian who comes across Janek Basista's story, may feel "at home" as being at home with the language one realises one's own place in the world.

On the other hand, this linguistic choice is also a manifestation of the fact that the fate that sent the narrator-writer to various places far away from his home town, got him to take with him his sense of Silesianness which he could not and would not deny (even if he did not always show it off).

The above-quoted case of Arkadiusz Gola illustrates a well-known regularity. It manifests itself in the circumstances in which a person strange to the people he or she encounters and wants to build rapport with, experiences situations when the knowledge of dialect becomes one of the elements which identify him or her positively in the residents' eyes. It is particularly important when this person tries to persuade them to shed some light on their intimate world. Merely using the Silesian language does not constitute a passport to it, but – as the photographer admits – is the first step to winning their trust. This was something Małgorzata Szejnert had some trouble with while collecting materials for her book *Czarny ogród* (2007), incidentally well received and it is not only about the trust in a researcher (journalist, artist) they must win in order to gain the possibly most comprehensive knowledge about the functioning of traditional families and communities. As Elżbieta Dutka notes: "The look at Silesia in *Czarny ogród* is a look from the outside (the writer is a newcomer who must overcome a number of obstacles to get close to the heroes of her book to make them willing to make confessions). Such a position has undoubtedly both advantages and disadvantages: on the one hand, it favours a more exploratory ('pure') look, free

of many conditions and burdens, but, on the other, it also makes the author merely signal many issues, note some problems without going deeper into them, reducing her presentation to the position represented by her interlocutors and informants” (Dutka, 2011: 39).

Janek Basista would say that Małgorzata Szejnert was not *local* in the Nikiszowiec or Giszowiec neighbourhoods the residents of which immediately spotted and defined the writer as a potential “cheat.” Consequently, “if you aren’t local – says Basista – you are suspicious” (Kutz, 2010: 163).

Trying to get the reader closer to the intimate world of everyday reality of people from “there,” a more important kind of trust is one that largely results from sharing this very reality, also linguistically. This is the trust the author wins among his readers when he is able to convince them that throughout the book they will be able to experience the world, which in the course of reading, becomes less strange and when they finish they may say that they have gained a number of ‘memories’ of places they visited and people from whom they could learn something.

Part II

The Case of Stefan Szymutko

One of the main assumptions of the SPHERE project was tracing biographies of the residents of post-industrial areas for the purpose of determining the trajectory of their social and individual identity change. The industrial regions were subjected to enormous economic, social and cultural transformations in the 20th century, which also affected the way the residents of those areas determined their position in the world, constructed their self-definitions and indicated their life goals, changing themselves in the wake of the wider social change. This process has always been involved in the dialogue with memory within which the past is kept under review, the way it is described is subject to change and the forefathers' life attitudes are redefined. In Stefan Szymutko's writing, Silesianness is subject to questioning, it needs redefinition and demands to be given its own position in the ever-changing reality. The author defining himself only half-jokingly as "collapsed industry fossil" (Szymutko, 2013: 185) goes back to the past in order to bring Silesia back to the present. He constructs, before the eyes of the readers, his identity of "a boy from Cimok" in order to indicate that in the world of literature, art and philosophy, geographical origin does not have to make its residents doomed to being parochial or provincial. By any means, such is not the case of Upper Silesia.

Stefan Szymutko's essays are consciously autothematic. To introduce the reader to his book *Nagrobek ciotki Cili* (2001) best is

to use the author's own words contained in and describing the very work. The author calls it "a cycle of [...] quazi- and non-quazi-Silesian texts. Just to enumerate: *Nagrobek ciotki Cili*, in which I claim my own historicity, and in it I demand existential significance and I get angry at one's existence being ignored – a rebellious and, in its rebelliousness, an unwise sketch against oblivion and invalidating invalidation as the most common dimensions of the human condition; written in the name of the validity of a life lived through, the sufficient significance of a life itself. Then: *Moja babka, mój dziadek, nasza samotność* – a document of a subject who discovers his own non-objectiveness; dilemmas of an I considering both his own finiteness (completeness) and the lack of a person's limits: a 20th century egocentric's surprise at his being both something peculiar and a kind, a species. Next: *Chłopcy z Cimoka. Opowieść nierozwojowa*. A story with no clear message, after all – of a boy who kicked a football under Pascal's sky in the modernising world. Especially in this last sketch – a desperately and surreptitiously written attempt to come to terms with the accidentality of oneself" (Szymutko, 2001: 63–64). This description should be completed with a note on *Pożegnanie*, the fourth and last essay from the discussed book, from which the reference to the previous three essays was quoted above. Without trying to even imitate Szymutko's style let us just mention that it is about an existential crisis of a highly educated, self-conscious individual who has experienced the anticipation of the end, of nothingness – the fate of every living human being; the essay on nihilism: "silent emptiness," which like a contagious disease poses a threat to the existential security of everybody who has encountered it, the inevitability of death that deprives the everyday hustle of any sense. A remedy (far from being perfect) is to be found in literature, writing, mental effort, "holding on to word out of fear of death" (Szymutko, 2013: 178), all of this, however, without an easy happy ending – Horace's "non omnis moriar" is cold comfort when one sees the future of our civilisation on the ash heap. It will, however, suffice "to reach hope, but not such a primitive one like 'life is worth living anyway' – hope that is not condescending to death, not teasing with love, not making believe that there is no ageing, vanishing, misery, no feeding off pulp humanities, yet granting a certain small support in this darkness" (Szymutko, 2013: 188).

Accordingly, literature and its relation with reality, this uneven equivalence (an oxymoron) on which the value of words is based: especially in prose, particularly in a scholarly paper, is the main protagonist of Stefan Szymutko's book. An idea worth noticing in the book in which the main goal was to search for the portraits and representations of Silesia in the contemporary literature. Again: Szymutko's Silesia (Silesianness) is a casual but very important character – surely not a mere background – in the struggle for the significance of word in the process of saving the purposefulness of an individual, separate biography. *Nagrobek* is a provocative book, as it concerns what is unique, individual, ontogenetic. And since a particular being – the main protagonist of my essays, comes from Silesia, I would not say it is of secondary importance but certainly the indicated property of the plot should not be overestimated, re-evaluated. If at all *Nagrobek* contains a philosophy of Silesia, it is an individual, somewhat incidental vision” (Szymutko, 2013: 211). Disregarding the highly disputable argument of an “individual vision” of Silesia included in the discussed essays, it is worth noticing that despite flirting with Joyce and Proust, the author's secondary issue was portraying Silesianness, searching for its essence, phenomenon, distinctive features, which does not mean the author failed to contain such observations in his work either. The place of birth is familiar to us. And so is the culture, time and language. Family and relatives are also not what one is given to choose. Szymutko ended up dealing with the reality of industrial Silesia in the second half of the 20th century. A reality which is always “individual, offered to an individual to grasp: removing the world's incomprehensiveness is individual trouble – similar though it is, yet different to each one of us, as its individual circumstances are different” (Szymutko, 2001: 51). However, guided by a wish to confront the particularity of one's fate with the universal (human) the author has used the props he was given. Consciously aiming for the ‘roots literature’ (Szymutko, 2013: 207) while denying himself the right to futile nostalgia, the author presented a record of searching for identity according to which an individual may identify “among people, in places of birth, growing up and adulthood” (Szymutko, 2013: 207). Such a search lacks a spontaneous and naive character. The author is a professional, a professor of literature, an academic

enjoying the fullness of a scholarly analytical systematism. He thus deconstructed identity while being aware of the paradox at the heart of the sense of one's own distinctness, specialness and uniqueness: although the ontogenic, individual and unitary awareness is given to us or although we feel separate, autonomous and indiscrete, what is so very separate and personal in us is social ("[i]dentity is a phenomenon that emerges from the dialectic relationship between an individual and society" Berger and Luckmann (1966) point out in *Social Construction of Reality*. In the broad sense of the word, also biological: "but who bestowed on me my double chin what glutton was it when my whole soul yearned for austerity"² (Szymutko, 2001: 29).

Identity is not just a medium of a purpose, offering a sense of continuity and rootedness: "[...] the greatest reward we might expect in our search for sense is capturing a slight continuation, a trace of order in accidentality, a flash of reasonability" (Szymutko, 2001: 38), it is also a weapon against the sense of loneliness, an emotion which has been experienced, paradoxically, by the majority of the individualized societies of late modernity. "Since my predecessors are part of me, I take after them my appearance [...], they must shape my speech too. [...] I am not the master of my speech, the other, the dead speak in it. [...] One is never alone with a word [...]" (Szymutko, 2013: 186). This is truly the overcrowded loneliness: I am not able to share my reality with others, but the language owing to which I am able to express myself, mostly imperfectly, "is common" (Szymutko, 2001: 51). I express myself through other, previous users of words, thanks to the language I am able to understand myself at all. What is more, I hear myself as I speak; my own subjective meanings are made objectively and continuously available to me and ipso facto become 'more real' to me. Another way of putting this is to recall the previous point about my 'better knowledge' of the other as against my knowledge of myself in the face-to-face situation. This apparently paradoxical fact has been previously explained by the massive, continuous and prereflective availability of the other's being in the face-to-face situation, as against the requirement of reflection for the availability of my own" (Berger, Luckmann, 1966: 52). I am given to myself in language, I look at myself through

² This is obviously Zbigniew Herbert in *Mr Cogito Looks at His Face in a Mirror*.

language. The sensual, visual, direct, overbearing reality is mute, the awareness which is always an awareness of something, awareness of a thing (body) prompts smells (madeleines), images (memory), symbols (dreams) but it becomes accessible only when we manage to capture it in a net of language, pronounce, describe, set it to rhymes or more or less concise prose. This is a phenomenological concept, which the author subscribes to in the very introduction and to which he returns all the time, and which we will enunciate once more in the sociological discourse: what is individual is mediated by the social, even in the most personal dimension. Only we must reckon with a loss during the process because there is no simple, straightforward translation: at this point the author objects to the dogma of our times, “he presents the relationship between language and reality as dialectic or dialogic” (Szymutko, 2001: 47).

Reality eludes the word which gets the closest to it only when we treat it as a thing which sounds, is a product of the vocal apparatus or has a graphic representation and is a written output, something sensuous, material, detached from meaning. We can lose ourselves in the social dimension of language: “[b]ecause they convinced me that even the lingual subject, the lingual ‘I’ is strange to my real ‘I’: it comes from the outside, appropriates me, distorts my individuality, makes it identify with the impersonal other (Barthes, Lacan)” (Szymutko, 2001: 30). Perhaps, the author thinks: “individuality cannot be generalised at all, perhaps what individuality and generality have in common is the fact that individuality always eludes generalisations, although in its distinctiveness – especially in speech – individuality yields to them?” (Szymutko, 2001: 64).

At this point we reach the end of language, Szymutko warns, further on we can easily fall into deceit or worse still, banality. At the same time, in this very place, at the border of “all discourses” (Szymutko, 2001: 64) we may be meant to reach to what is most precious in literature, what makes it true art – this impossible ambition of literature to “articulate what remains beyond the word is not contained by it, what wordlessly teases the word, mocks the word, does not pass on to the word, something altogether different. Writing about something that is impossible to be written about” (Szymutko, 2001: 67). The author uses these words in the introduction to the description of the existen-

tial crisis, one of whose circumstances is the clash with “the reality of the world: first – most important – full realization of one’s own reality. The [...] [d]isintegrated subject collapses into himself, his own body, experiences his body as a thing, the suffering of the fact that the body is silent, does not respond” (Szymutko, 2001: 74). The body remains still because pain and suffering do not get one closer to words but more distant from them: “nothing in crisis poses more impatience than a word – impatience of the tired of itself ‘I; I’ verging on emptiness, thinking only about nothing” (Szymutko, 2001: 71). It is impossible to write from within a crisis. “When one writes out of despair then he does not despair in fact” (Szymutko, 2001: 68). Szymutko quotes Bataille, who “exposes the hypocrisy of writing about crises when he states: ‘These judgements should lead to silence and yet I am writing’” (Szymutko, 2001: 72).

At this point we come to the function of literature which, according to the author, is “being’s objection to transition” (Szymutko, 2001: 83). Owing to language the author attempted to “trick his aunt out of non-being,” to build her, in the very first and, importantly, title essay – a tomb, which was, in material form, missing. Somewhere in these endeavours echoes Czesław Miłosz’s call: “What is poetry which does not save / Nations or people? / A connivance with official lies, / A song of drunkards whose throats will be cut in a moment, / Readings for sophomore girls” (Miłosz, 2011: 143). In *Pożegnanie* Szymutko does not hide anymore behind uncles, aunts, grandmothers and grandfathers, although he does hide behind form. He writes about utter pain and suffering in detail: about painful physiology, body inability, anxiety, mental indolence and carnal numbness. He makes us ponder the filth of guts and flesh. This most personal of his texts is also the least intimate in terms of the message. The narrator gives up the overused “I” and the first person singular narration, using the impersonal, matter-of-fact style, escaping from the subjective to the objective, more often than in his previous texts exploits quotations, while being aware of hiding behind the words of those “wiser than himself” (Szymutko, 2001: 88). This is a formal procedure meant to protect, presumably, the author against the danger of the banality, dullness and, eventually, ridicule of a number of pitfalls which an author who dramatizes his own suffering fails to avoid. “[...] evil and misery is re-

peatable, standard and stereotypical" ('inactive') (Szymutko, 2001: 82).

Simultaneously, in the general he will search for what he experienced in the particular as "reading and writing is rescue from decline, they're ways of getting out of the darkness and the whirl of the inside, the sensuality of the body" (Szymutko, 2001: 72). Therefore he writes because, as he confesses having read Heidegger's *Contributions to Philosophy*, he is not that completely sure that "life has no sense" (Szymutko, 2001: 37). He writes because, after Miłosz, he thinks that the fabric of language tends to unstick from reality, but efforts to put the pieces together "are largely futile as much as – we feel it – absolutely necessary" (Szymutko, 2001: 60). Finally he writes, although "words are always stripped of the reality, they cover the reality in paint, sugar-coat things with language" (Szymutko, 2001: 86); what passes – decays beyond the word, remains outside time, memory and history.

Silesian sociological banality

Roman Jakobson distinguished six semantic functions of language corresponding to six elements of the communication process: sender, receiver, communiqué, code, context, channel. These are, respectively, the functions: emotive, communicative, poetic, metalinguistic, referential and phatic. Undoubtedly, we would find them all in Szymutko's prose, but it is not what we aim for. We will only indicate three of them: referential, poetic and, to a lesser extent, metalinguistic. Trying to reach the representation of Silesia in *Nagrobek ciotki Cili* we attempt to present only the ways in which the author portrayed this Silesianness. So we follow the original idea of the author for whom, as was already mentioned, language was in the centre of attention. He used it consciously remembering about the content, the representation level of the text (corresponding with the representative level) and the form which is in itself a communiqué (the poetic function). A Polish study related a banal but a worth mentioning at this point idea. The previously signalled persistent self-referencing of his account, the constant presence of the author in the text, with his biography, background, education, generally: his 'historicality' (it is very close to the emotive function, but it is not what we mean here), doing

hard work in front of the readers of the whole process of writing, fulfills the metalinguistic function, drawing the reader's attention to the very code: literature (language).

In this part of the text we will focus on the referential function of the analysed texts: Szymutko directly writes about Silesia, he portrays it, includes specific information, provides data, characteristics, draws from Silesian reality in order to bring out the elements which, as he views it, construct the region's characteristics. Through his history – his own historicality, the story of his family – his “past days,” images of his kith and kin, dead and alive, descriptions of locations and behaviours, he evokes Silesianness, in which he, as he claims ever since the first line, looks for his own identity: “Who of us – people of a certain age – will not look with amazement at their childhood or early youth photographs, will not ask themselves what connection do I have with this paper shadow?” (Szymutko, 2001: 21). Basically, by virtue of our profession, this layer of Szymutko's writing should interest us the most as it is of sociological nature. Yet, on this very level, which we state being fully aware of committing the sin of iconoclasm, we get something banal, a stereotype (which as the author himself noted, does not have to “contain untruths” (Szymutko, 2013: 219)) – an image known to sociologists (they jointly created it) from the very beginning – no surprise. However, let the sharp edge of our observation be taken off (or pointed at us) by our assurance that we write these words with an equally full awareness of the circumstances, which was rightly expressed by John Steinbeck: “In literary criticism the critic has no choice but to make over the victim of his attention into something the size and shape of himself” (Szymutko, 2013: 94).

Let us then get to the point. On the very first page of *Nagrobek* the author announces his class identification, which during his school education (we will return to this issue later) does not allow him to fully understand *Pan Tadeusz*: “How could one rave over Lithuanian style cold beet soup when a dinner party would associate with Silesian dumplings and red cabbage? How could one feel at home among guests wearing Old Polish split-sleeve overcoats, if what made up the Silesians' Sunday best was a black suit and white shirt? Especially that the aesthetic strangeness linked with the class one: the heroes of the national epic everybody would identify with, were those to whom

the poet Adam Mickiewicz gave a minor role to play, like ploughing in the background, cleaning at the manor, serving their masters. No surprise then that the reader would treat such masters as garrulous and silly slobs" (Szymutko, 2011: 21).

In this single passage the author managed to summarise the basis of Silesian culture: its Plebeian character and the absolutely fundamental value of work, especially physical work. It necessarily must also include the cuisine which the author had repeatedly emphasised as being very important to him, with the absolutely canonical dish (the description missed the Silesian beef roulade which must have been there, thus: "there is only football and beer left" (Szymutko, 2011: 41)) and dialect, slipped in by the author in the text, and we have a wide range of the elementary determinants of Silesianness. On the following pages the author further complements this picture, familiar anyway. Primarily we have the image of an extended and numerous family. The lively, strong and frequent family contacts are the substance of Silesianness. Szymutko emphasises the closeness of the relationship drawing attention to the resignation from "the complicated geometry of family relationships, the paradigmatic distances [...], because the Silesian family does not accept such dispersion so gladly, does not tolerate the remoteness of its members. It is oneness, a beautiful oneness although found a little bit tiresome by an individual in this being together" (Szymutko, 2011: 23). To compare: "[t]he flats [...], the spacious kitchens where everybody would sit together, had to hold up to a dozen or so siblings. The space organization of the Silesian flat contradicts the contemporary ideas of family members' need for privacy and intimacy of" (Gnieciak, 2011: 126–127). To put it more briefly: "Silesian native inhabitants have always found the creation and coexistence of the family most important" (Bukowska-Floreńska, 2007: 62).

The closeness of the relationship, as already stressed, was determined by the spatial proximity. The family lived together, at their own place, next to each other. This is what Szymutko recalls when describing the aging of Aunt Cilia's, who having suffered from pelvic fracture limited her social life to visits at her sister's, the author's grandmother, at "a house situated a hundred metres away from the house of Uncle Antek and Aunt Cilka with whom she lived" (Szymutko, 2011: 27). Family life

was the centre of the Silesian universe, next to the coal mine, which organised that world. The coal mine was where Szymutko's grandfather worked, he was the one the author was named after and who died tragically in the mine buried by dumps of coal in a catastrophe, four years before his first grandson was born ("Just try and beat the myth out!" (Szymutko, 2013: 214)). Neither does Szymutko omit, although he never dealt with that outright, the issue of the Silesian family structure organisation, of keen interest to sociologists and provoking question: patriarchal or matriarchal? (cf. Bukowska-Floreńska, 2007; Górnikowska-Zwolak, 2004; Mrozek, 1965). The author seems to lean towards the latter, an actually far less popular option: "[...] according to Kutz as well as Waniek, the one who is admirable is the Silesian woman, she not he. The Silesian man is sluggish, awkward, a drag – it is the Silesian woman who is hard working, thrifty, stubborn and effective. In my writing, mind you – the protagonist is a woman, Aunt Cila" (Szymutko, 2013: 219) – said the author in one of the interviews conducted after the publication of *Nagrobek*. Besides, not only Aunt Cila stands for a strong gender accent in Szymutko's Silesian story, we also have Granny Marika, whose sharp tongue and resolute attitude to life and death we find out about in her last response: "The famous last words of the dying aunt were her reply when I asked her how she was feeling: 'poo' (meaning: crap)" (Szymutko, 2011: 36). Or a depiction of strong womanhood found in the story of his grandmother from his father's side – the "Silesian Juliet" (Szymutko, 2011: 35), who "used to be an extremely interesting person, intelligent, unconventional" (Szymutko, 2011: 35) was a social activist, performed in an amateur theatre, was one of the youngest liaison officers in the Silesian uprisings.

Apart from these characters, so highlighted in the narrative, there is a whole social background made up of a number of various uncles, aunts, grandmothers and grandfathers. The book is "first a tribute held to my aunt, my granny, grandfathers: I use these names in a broader sense because in Cimok (I mention it in the book) we had a lot of grannies and granddads, there was no familial division, my friends' grannies took care of us as much as they did of their own grandchildren" (Szymutko, 2013: 215). And this element is not so surprising for us. "A branched net of relationship, based on this actual

maintenance of relations, long standing residence in the local environment (manifesting itself in, for example, as mentioned by Szymutko, reluctance to leave the place or to send children to summer camps – author’s note) [...] social coexistence based on direct contacts with a wide range of personal acquaintances, particularly neighbours – all of these does not only connect a miner’s family to the local environment but also creates the framework of social control, regulating family members’ behaviour” (Mrozek, 1965: 192). We deal with the specificity of the Silesian culture with the characteristic type of bonds linking the residents of working class estates. Their framework was set by an arrangement of three overlapping environments, that is, “working environment, living environment and family environment. The social spaces set by each of them were largely common to each other” (Świątkiewicz, 1997: 72). What I mean here is the so-called *familok* house syndrome, a spatially and socially determined form of living of working class communities with heavily accented integrative functions within the above-mentioned three environments, constituting an individual framework of reference, indicating the cognitive perspective and individuals’ determining their goals and life aspirations and strengthening the effectiveness of the social control system. The control whose main element was attachment to tradition and deep religiousness, the manifestation of which in the case of Aunt Cilia slightly teased Szymutko: “Like most Catholic believers she considered herself God’s advocate: preached, checked, admonished” (Szymutko, 2011: 25). This is yet another ‘canonical Silesian quality: “It is widely known that Silesians are ardently religious and truly attached to faith. It is also well known how important the attitude to religion and church was in the history of Silesia, especially in the times of political pressure. The role of religion was and still is not anything detached from the rest of life: it is embedded in the cult of traditional forms and the observance of custom. The importance of these phenomena was assessed for the sake of national identity being maintained by the people in Silesia” (Rybicki, 1938: 127).

Considering the foregone statement by the classic Polish sociologist let us return once more to *Pan Tadeusz*, the most Polish of all Polish works. The selection of this particular work made by Szymutko, who constantly mocks – what needs to be put in inverted commas

– his ‘megalomania’ of being the Joyce of Mysłowice, cannot be incidental because having skipped the dubious, although meticulously stressed by the author, ambition to create an immortal literary work, he attaches the whole of it to Polishness, from which the author does not want to separate his Silesianness. Perhaps there is a solution employed by the author, similar to the one used by Kutz in *Paciorki jednego różańca*, where in the lengthy prologue the camera scans the flat of a Silesian miner’s family, starting from state decorations and the Polish flag emblem in the central place of the room. A Silesian is undoubtedly a Pole.

But Szymutko does not stop at this, in the successive sentences of *Nagrobek* he moves on smoothly to the above-mentioned Joyce, mentions also Proust (from whose trope of madeleines, in the Silesian variety of *kopytka* dumplings, he starts another essay) – the Silesian is part of the Polish, moreover: it is part of the European. He stresses: “I do not aim to juxtapose the familiarity of the land of childhood and the strangeness of literary worlds. Even more so I would not like to make a value juxtaposition: on the one hand – the healthy, unpretentious, Silesian culture, on the other hand – degenerated, (dubiously) high culture. I do regret though that, while I know it is nonsensical, foolish, silly to say, that the historicity of Mysłowice was not to have become a universal historicity the way Proust saved Combray (Illiers), and Joyce – Dublin” (Szymutko, 2011: 21–22). Szymutko postulates to abolish the division into low and high culture, provincial and universal. Frankly, Proust’s Combray was not that of a metropolis either. Not to mention Mickiewicz’s Soplicowo, whose insularity was elevated to a virtue. However, these locations have managed to reach world literature and Szymutko wishes the same for Mysłowice. He highlights the otherness of the Silesian culture, but this strangeness, he declares, made him open onto non-Silesian worlds. Brought up in the Silesian dialect, a boy from Cimok became a professor of literature at the faculty of Polish studies. But then again, this process was not free of loss.

Maine Road and the “unfortunate socialisation”

Szymutko writes his book constantly referencing phenomenology in its main variation, the philosophical one. He does not in fact refer to sociological literature, but as was already said, the way he navigates the identity discourse points to the fact that he was not completely unknowledgeable in this matter. This is also proved by the picture of Silesia drawn in the book, a sociological cliché, one actually, as we will indicate later, undoubtedly useful. Coming back to identity, the first title essay allowed him to amaze at himself and pose a question which opens each consideration over the social ‘I’: who am I? In the following essay *Moja babka, mój dziadek, nasza samotność* Szymutko looks at his relationships with his relatives, deceased and descendants alike. He never even got to know his grandfather, but – as he exemplifies with his fondness to *kopytka* (dumplings) and cigars, his grandfather is very present in him. The author is searching then on the level of the bodily.

The carnal element, within the phenomenological conceptual framework of Luckmann and Berger, is the basis for identity. Understood, on the one hand, as the mainstay of anything individual, and, on the other hand, as the “biogram of the species.” Let us confront Szymutko with Luckmann. The former: “Is it me or somebody else

in me wants *kopytka* (dumplings) and a good cigar? Who? – my predecessors? It is true then that (James Joyce, *Ulysses*) ‘their blood is in me, their lusts my waves’? And later: “it is amazing, surprising how little we are individual even in the so called physical appearance on the basis of which we are recognised. [...] The shape is not ours, although there is also this common shape which stays the same” (Szymutko, 2011: 30). And Thomas Luckmann, in a slightly different style: “the constituent elements of personal identity, the human body, the elementary structures of consciousness and the basic determinants of social interactions are established in the ‘biogram’ of the species. The concrete development of any individual personal identity, however, depends upon a socio-historical *a priori*” (after: Bokszański, 1989: 202). Identity as we learn from the last sentence, has a temporal structure: internal and external. The latter denotes the time, historical epoch, in which we are (were) to live. We get thrown into time and a specific socio-cultural reality. We grow in it. “[...] the world, as it presents itself to the members of society operating within the quotidian approach, is historical, already organized. It did not appear with the member’s birth; it will not perish with his death. From the beginning, the world is experienced *pretheoretically* as the prevailing and persistent condition of all the members’ projects. It furnishes the resistant ‘objective structures,’ which must be reckoned with in a practically adequate fashion if projects of action are to be effected successfully” (Zimmerman, Pollner, 1989: 350).

As Szymutko states after Heidegger, possibly: “human beings always think within [...] their tiny angle of space-time” (Szymutko, 2011: 75). The author then is drawn to the past. First, he asks about the dead, dedicated two essays to them, in the following third one *Chłopcy z Cimoka. Historia nierozwojowa* he asks about himself. We first of all receive, again, a collective portrayal, young Szymutko is shown in a crowd of school youth, captured sometime in the mid-1970s, not behind the desks but on the field while playing football. It is a coming of age story, with first erotic fascinations, fun, education and betrayal. Szymutko depicts “a slant meadow on the shaft (old clay pit), boggy almost throughout the year, due to its clay bottom” which served him and his friends as a football field. This place earned the name of the Maine Road, after the name of the Manchester City stadium, the place

of the infamous defeat of Górnik Zabrze; the match played in heavy rain which turned the neat English pitch into a swamp (the headlines, tastefully revoked by Szymutko, said: *Chorzów's win drowned in English mud*).¹ In this nomenclature extravaganza the author looks for a symbol of linguistic and sociological, maybe even ontological, spontaneous, mindless, yet sincere betrayal of the heritage and provincial reality: “we stifled Silesianness by foreign names. [...] The very direction of the escape – to Europe, the violence and radicality of this cutting off makes us ask whether perhaps the reason for our behaviour was fear, care for our own life: whether in the land of our youth [...], we failed to see death, shadow, darkness?” (Szymutko, 2011: 42). And later he explains: “The boys of Cimok were in fact born as late (delayed?) Silesians, the last generation of a certain period in the region's existence, which was transformed before our very eyes from the industrial-agricultural to solely industrial: we saw the field (our field) turn into a factory or a housing estate; we used to play in solid, brick-built barns, which stopped being needed only to become landscape oddities.

Therefore, we had to rebel against our Silesian destiny when we saw death in it – not as an accomplishment but as a brutal borderline. Silesianness appeared to us stigmatised, paralysed by death; we could not have not known, not seen that the industrial and agricultural world of our grandparents is dying” (Szymutko, 2011: 43). This is widely known: during the Second World War Upper Silesia, in accordance with the vision of the new authorities, became the country's industrial centre. Extensive industrialisation resulted in the dynamic development of towns on the traditionally rural areas – in the mid-1970s Mysłowice

¹ At this point, guided by scientific honesty, we are obliged to claim our decisive *votum separatum* from the arguments raised on the occasion of Stefan Szymutko naming the Mysłowice field. The author claims that it is easier to explain the origin of the name, calling it after the place of Górnik Zabrze's defeat, not its function, thus placing this name in the area of language disruptions. Further, he argues that “the meaning of the name has no sense – it is significant without *signifié* [...] Maine Road is covered by clay, mud” (Szymutko, 2011: 49). We believe it is just the opposite. The description of the pitch made by the author precisely emphasises the soggy character of the ground and the constant presence of water at the place of the footballers' struggle. The name then does not cover reality – it brings it out. As Krzysztof Uniłowski rightly noted in the postscript to *Nagrobek*, that “Szymutko underrates the unknowing irony of the ‘boys of Cimok’” (Szymutko, 2011: 98). Apparently, he underrates their sense of humour too, which in the context of further analysis, comes as a surprise.

was also sprawling. What many people found a period of prosperity, especially in the newspaper-propaganda jargon, for the generation of Szymutko's predecessors was the end of a certain world order. At this point we would like to draw attention to the author's identification, who saw his childhood's Silesianness through the generation of people who were already passing or already long gone (and as a young man he turned his back on it, just like youth turns its back on old age). Is it not that the world perceived from such perspective, regardless of the region, place and time, the socio-economic background, is always bound to be a view of a certain end? Or perhaps Szymutko while writing these words in 1998, burdening the images of his youth with a vision of a landfill: decay, waste, trash and death, does not refer to what he just sees out of the window. Silesia is dying once more. This time this industrial, modern one. Everything points to the fact that Silesia had died many times in the 20th century: in Szymutko's prose it is a synonym of the end, a borderline.² Yet it must be noticed: in the book there is no description of a middle generation, the parents of the boys of Cimok. Szymutko comments on this in one sentence: “to most of us grandparents substituted our parents (we were deprived of both father and mother by gainful employment)” (Szymutko, 2011: 43). He remembers his elder sister, his only sister, while in Aunt Cilia's generation: “There were seven of them” (Szymutko, 2011: 23). So the middle generation starts a modern family, a nuclear one. Both parents work – but in the traditional Silesian family: “baba noleży przy blasze [the woman's place is in the kitchen]” (Górnikowska-Zwolak, 2004: 125). Thus, this is not “the traditional Silesian family,” although it is hard to say anything about the rest of its characteristics, Szymutko, as has been said, remains silent in this respect. There is, however, an implication, that a certain “betrayal,” the author would accuse himself and his peers of so gladly, must have ensued in the very generation. He does not include such Silesianness in literature (as it is not a myth?). For Szymutko the “true” Silesia, meaning: plebeian, ardently religious, with numerous children and first of all appreciating manual labour – is one of his grandparents. The “late” generation could just imitate them, trying to follow patterns not necessarily found in life though:

² “Anachronic Szymutko, outdated (egh!) author, fossil of the fallen industry” (Szymutko, 2013: 185)

“[b]ut even our Silesianness was partly artificial, pretended, taken (for example) from the films, we used to call one of us Erwin, although we did not know any true, real Erwin: we did, however, watch Kutz’s films and we remembered the name of an uprising soldier the role of whom was played by Jan Englert (Silesians acting as Silesians – the mimesis paradoxes)” (Szymutko, 2011: 46). Szymutko comes up with the tropes: “reality has been replaced by simulation” (Szymutko, 2011: 50). This is the world from Jean Baudrillard’s writing: the industrial Silesia as a simulacrum, a copy pretending to be an original.

The agricultural and industrial Silesia was real – the strictly industrial region merely pretended to be one. “The iconography and discourse of the Polish People’s Republic was connected with the mythologization of the industrial power of a state of ‘young democracy,’ the cult of manual labour, in which steelworks, factories and coal mines became a spatial symbol of a new era and the most important element of the ‘economic miracle’ ideology. In this sense the communist authorities exploited the potential of Upper Silesia [...] with its developed industrial infrastructure dating back – notably – to the 18th century, making the region be its showcase. And the miner, his work ethos and lifestyle had long become a pattern to follow, the ideal of a new citizen. Industrial labour was thus politicised in the process of mythologization, within the framework of which the blast furnace chimney and the coal mine shaft became part of a political system formation” (Gnieciak, 2013: 89–90). As early as in the times of Szymutko’s youth, Silesia became a myth, understood here after Ronald Barthes as a symbol deprived of historicity, “transforming a meaning into form [...] theft of language” (Barthes, 2000: 264). And Szymutko, phenomenologically (and personally) involved, raises questions on this very historicity, on the existence spanned on the Silesian matrix, of which the popular and widely known constituents became elements of this peculiar folklore.³ He does not

³ This theme also recurred in the SPHERE research, in which one of the experts, art historian Irma Kozina, so emphasised the process of turning the working culture into artificial, unified, kitsch culture, the “McDonaldization” of the industrial monuments now housing department stores (Silesia City Centre) or open air museums (Guido coal mine), “museumization” of entire quarters, which is very much the case with the famous Nikiszowiec. Today we can see it no longer existing while, for example, at the Kleofas coal mine there is a tower, but today the tower is like a MacDonald’s style chewing gum just because it was converted

challenge the myth, neither does he deconstruct it – on the contrary, he tries to animate it and not because this myth and its liveliness are of particular interest to him: he tries to save his relatives from his empty form. Szymutko argues for “a place of an individual in history” (Szymutko, 2013: 198), “which closes for the individual” (Szymutko, 2013: 194), indifferent to “its heroes, especially those rank and file ones (Szymutko, 2013: 193), who become insignificant, ‘pushed beyond history,’ deprived of a place in it. Or the other way around, attained by history, invisible in the mass which is milled day by day by the machine of history” (Szymutko, 2013: 194). The banality, which we quite provocatively attributed to the sociological level of Szymutko’s essays, derives from this very play with form, based on the fuelling of the tension between the individual and the collective, the unitary and the social, the particular and the universal.

Szymutko, taking recourse through Heidegger and Husserl, to the concreteness of existence, the sensuous truth persisting somewhere at the edge of language, leaves a sociologist helpless, eludes their tools, putting the sociological analysis in dread of a stereotype. “I am really stupid:⁴ I deal with ordinary history (‘this is an ordinary story’), trying to extract from the generality of the civilizational and social transformations the individual meanings, as if an insignificant individual did count in the social history, as if it was not just a statistical element of those transformations” (Szymutko, 2011: 60). A question arises then of whether the sociological analysis of Szymutko’s writing acts to the contrary and against the author’s intentions, as it put Aunt Cilia and Grandfather Stefan into the framework from which their

into a sign informing us that this is the location of Silesia City Centre. [...] I once reached [while I was there – M.G.] what was called Silesia Square. And when I was there at this square I could see these Chinese lanterns which were supposed to be miner’s lamps. And around the square I saw something which I first thought were slices of lemon, so there must be a place I could buy lemonade with lemon. And then no, the lemons were supposed to be flywheels. The style of the whole thing was so cheap, Chinese, like a chewing gum, so bad that hardly anything there resembled a true mine at this Silesia Square (Gnieciak, 2013: 106).

⁴ Equal to self-criticism – a wordplay: the author draws attention that *cimok* in Silesian dialect means “darkness, dusk, night. *Cmok* – the official name of the quarter – denotes ‘a fool’ in it (Silesians used the name *Cimok*). Consequently, we can interpret the above sentence as “I really *am* *Cmok*’ – I am from Silesia.” We will return to the theme of similar language plays again.

grandson wanted to break free, pushes them into the mechanisms of the era, generalizes, typifies, looks for a statistical key, while the author wanted to save their subjective individuality. He omits the latter in turn: he cannot cope with Grandfather Stefan’s singing nor can he with his aunt being barefoot (although this story may be included in the statistics of the gerontological problems of our times). He argues with the author despite the fact that, in accordance with him as well as for him, he draws from humanistic sociology, relies upon the “humanistic coefficient” agreeing to follow his thought and agreeing to meet it halfway. As Szymutko says: “We rightly denied our own historicity, hid behind nonauthenticity because we came to live in the civilisation in which no one asks about a person’s reality, historicity and identity – in which money (Bauman’s continuing lesson) determines the range of the freedom of choice and the measure of a man’s value is not personality and its history, but the function and role in social institutions: position, successes, achievements, property, etc.” (Szymutko, 2011: 49).

It is of course worthy to interpret this sentence as irony; the author is critical in his assessment of the times in which we are to live and by taking such a stance shows he is a true humanist. In the name of the sociological accuracy we must admit, however, that the author, despite making a reference to Zygmunt Bauman, is wrong. The author’s search for and questioning of his identity by way of turning to his past not only appears in the postmodern world very regularly, but it is almost a determinant of this era, its *Zeitgeist*. Let us now return to Thomas Luckmann and Peter Berger’s phenomenology. Societies in which an individual does not ask about identity because it is obvious are those with a simple division of labour and a limited distribution of power, the so-called traditional societies. “Everybody knows who everybody else is and who he is himself. A knight is a knight and a peasant is a peasant” (Boksański, 1989: 208). In such a society the norm is *fortunate socialisation*, in which an individual’s identity gets closer to a harmonious synthesis while being a subjective reflection of the society’s institutional order. In the modern society with diverse sources of knowledge and a complicated distribution of power things are getting complicated. The population of the socializing personnel is growing and along with this growth, its philosophically

oriented heterogeneity is expanding, socialisation ceases to be fortunate (it becomes *unfortunate socialisation* instead) the world stops being harmoniously consistent – identity becomes a common problem to solve (the matter is getting complicated even more when we turn to the postmodern theories of identities, the world’s heterogeneity is increasing enough to make discussion about any identity problematic: Szymutko is aware of it when he refers to Deleuze on page 42 of the analysed work). Following this path a sociologist will discern *Chłopcy z Cimoka* in the perspective of a story about the clash between the values of this real/unreal Silesian world and modernity which through the terror of school education, the artificiality of pop culture (bell-bottoms, a paper but hot bosom of a Hungarian singer published in *Na Przełaj* magazine) transported this “late generation” to the world of new challenges and a different axiological system. Supposedly, this interpretation might be in line with the author’s intention. There is, however, a problem around the corner as we approach the issue of education, which tends to be a sensitive matter in sociological writings. The centralised educational system emphasised the correct use of Polish (and whatever we may think of it, in the case of Szymutko it proved successful). This process based on the eradication of dialects from linguistic behaviours of the schooled youth came in for criticism from part of the representatives of the sociological community who saw in such activity a process of institutionalised cultural uprooting aimed at the indigenous Silesian culture: “The fundamental mechanism of the ‘symbolic violence’ making Silesian culture illegal in sociological terms consisted in marking as culturally subordinate or even illegal the Silesian dialect, or more broadly – Silesian linguistic behaviours, related to at least a hard manner of pronouncing literary Polish language. This was due to the fact that the dialect was [...] a factor of social and cultural identification, putting it beyond the pale in terms of linguistic behaviours was clearly understood by the Silesian community as the banning of the whole Silesian culture” (Błasiak, 1990: 129).

This interpretation prevails when Szymutko writes about forcing “us at school to speak pure Polish as if the dialect was dirt one should wash off immediately” (Szymutko, 2011: 44). But then he adds: “finally we met [them] halfway” (Szymutko, 2011: 44). Szymutko does not level

a charge, at least he pleads being an associate in guilt: “The Cimok boys’ land of childhood was flawed by their disloyalty – first and manifestly: the abandonment of their own language” (Szymutko, 2011: 44). The author’s stance thus leads to leaving behind the above, drawn from Pierre Bourdieu, interpretation of a system of education. The boys of Cimok wanted to educate because they understood that although the world could do without them, they need the world. “The system – as in Lem’s *Eden* – may function on its own, without the users; we needed the system in order to exist socially, so we yielded to its requirements” (Szymutko, 2011: 50). In the fondness for strange sounding names, in the ironic and contemptuous attitude towards the traditional Silesianness, which was for them, as Szymutko enumerates – burdensome, anachronic and deprived of the future, it is hard to look for the suffering of the victim of the oppressive system. The Cimok boys “did seriously take care of their lives both at school and beyond it [...] they could not reject the era of money, career, impartiality and artificiality, the era of fantastic technical possibilities, the incomparable with other eras, comforts of living, easiness of traveling and obtaining information – they could not, because one cannot reject their own times and choose other times” (Szymutko, 2011: 59).

For a sociologist the interpretative problem still remains unsolved. Leaning towards a competitive interpretation of the still growing rates of the Silesians’ education level, this time regarded from the perspective of the modernisation success and the region’s road to the civilizational top, is not as it will turn out soon, justified either, although very tempting. The life story of a Silesian young man who has advanced from a *familok* house to his own flat at the estate, as we find out – with a study and a balcony, would place the author among a considerable number of compatriots who have followed the same route within the several decades of the previous century. For most of them similar transfers were determinants of a considerable life advancement. What can be done about the clear lament flowing out of the noted words: “My friends no longer talk using the dialect, although they are tired with the so-called cultural Polish and choke with the essentially foreign word – one feels sorry to hear them pretend that a borrowed phrase expresses their problems; it makes one laugh when they try in vain to hide behind the newspaper chatter or a tel-

elevision caricature of speech; it makes one cry when they are unable to express themselves; it is tragic that is so difficult for us to communicate today although we still want and need to” (Szymutko, 2011: 43). To be honest, it is hard to interpret the above claim in terms of success. So perhaps it is an uprooting resulting in crisis and despair – the author himself in an interview admits though: “Because it is a book about splitting, passing from one culture to another, from Silesian plebeian culture to the world culture actually but still remembering the former. I had to reconcile in myself a Silesian child with a grown-up whose bonds with Silesia are not so strong, straightforward anymore” (Szymutko, 2013: 216–217).

The social advancement as we learn from Sorokin and Lenski, understood in terms of changing the social status, is reflected in the philosophy of life and ways of thinking, and with a number of advantages, for example a clear growth in self-esteem, burdens an individual with considerable stress, restricts contacts with old friends and induces change of a lifestyle (Domański, 2004: 43–48). So, what when despite his declaration the author is clearly unable and unwilling to see himself and his life path in such terms, posing this type of cognitive schema at the level of a not very ambitious television entertainment: “[...] I cannot summarise my historicity, impose a clear plot on it, make myself believe that it does have such a plot – I am not going to pull the wool over my eyes, although as a professor of literature, I am knowledgeable about woolly storylines too. And I could use my left leg to put my own historicity into a story of a split between the Silesian Cimok and the civilisationally neutral housing estate at Brzęczkowice, the plebeian youth and a suspicious, for many reasons unreliable, academic maturity. I could work it all out turning it into sky-high artistic prose about a futile longing for a sense, confusion, severed cultural continuity, inability to recognise himself in the previous despite the present sense of identity” (Szymutko, 2011: 81). Szymutko refutes serious sociological analysis with irony, eludes its forms and lays claims to being specially treated: out of the box, out of the statistics, out of any handy typology. We may reproach him for contradicting himself. But then again it is a book about splitting, about his own, separate drama, whose author wishes not to, in the name of his concrete, real existence, generalise and simplify.

“I have always, not only when I worked on *Nagrobek*, been amused by the opacity of my confessions, so deeply true and lengthy though they are” (Szymutko, 2013: 187).

Silesia as form

At this point we wish to return to the above-mentioned Roman Jacobson's theory of communicative functions. Trying to present the vision of Silesia the author of *Nagrobek* sketched in his essays, we would like to follow the path of the poetic function – the form, manner in which the writer composed his work. We are going in this direction after a clear encouragement Szymutko himself offered in the essay *Zaczyn* written after the publication of the analysed book, and which was both a comment and a continuation – in his inimitable style – that is, an explanation why the continuation has not yet come into being and, especially, why is its creation so time-consuming. “Literature has been pushed out by (at most) literary journalism, in which the subject is basically what counts (e.g., love in the family or the dilemmas of being gay or happiness in capitalism etc.), and about the way it is presented we try to talk the least and in general terms, as if the medium was not a means. Let us honour this thesis and its author! – he did not live to see the times, in which his fundamental theorem is almost commonly ignored” (Szymutko, 2013: 184) says the author in the mentioned essay. As he wished, while reading *Nagrobek* we tried to keep McLuhan in mind. For this part

of our analysis we have left, apart from the introduction, this layer of Szymbutko's writing out, the one in which the author makes notes about the nature of language, especially in the variation which was of most interest to us, that is, the Silesian dialect. As we have seen at the beginning, the insight into language, its relationship with the reality is at the heart of the author's thoughts, which also include considerations on the Silesian identity. We will begin by quoting lengthy extracts from the title essay, the threads of which were continued by the author in the following parts of the collection. "Although the Silesian posed difficulty understanding the non-Silesian, it drew attention to the other, made one search within another, yet after all the same culture – a useful thought, a useful word. Why give up, annul the point of entry? The identity of problems, dilemma, pain eased, tamed whatever is strange. Let us quote an extract of the autobiographical novel by a Silesian author Dominik Otkowicz:

"Zacząć łosprować... Kaj i jak? Łod plynćrzy na szłapach? Łostało się zdjęcie. Karlus z kwiotkiem w rzyci (blank gryfny, łoszpetta mo ruła) kipnął się na klin ciotki Anki, by lepi widzieć tyn bilderbuch, co mu pokazywała. A richtik kipnął sie, bo go fest bolały te blazy, co je skórzane zole żarły. Albo śmierć ciotki Rołzy, taki baby, co dawała bombony, a jak szyrktła, myśłolby kto drzewniano szpetno kukła, co by niy pamiętoł, jak charłała... Po cimoku po pogrzebie ciotki Rołzy rzykołech choby głupi, dzierzylech w łapach jej taszyn-lampa, jo som godoł Panu Boćkowi, co dom mu ją nazod, jak niy byda już myśłoł o umrzykach. O rzyć roztrzaść! Jo by tak chcioł pamijętać, fto to był dło mnie ciotka Rołza."

Funny, naive? Not in translation, even if only philological, which, naturally, cannot render the whole artistic complexity of the original version:

"To begin the story. With what? With blisters on my feet? There is a photo left. A spiritual boy (quite good-looking in fact, ugliness is patient) is leaning over Aunt Ania's knees while she was showing him a book of photographs – actually the leaning was an escape from the unbearably painful pressure of the leather soles on the skin full of ill liquid. Or Aunt Róża's death: an experience of transformation of a Candy giver to an indifferent, awful puppet who, if it was not for the memory of her premortal spluttering... It was the night after

Róża's funeral that I prayed the most fervently holding her torch in my hands, I promised God I would give it back if he set me free from thoughts about the dead. He did not. How much I would like to remember who aunt Róża was for me."

Dominik Otkowicz writes on great themes in the Silesian dialect. First of all, we should notice a biological shock, an inability to cope with the essentially animal nature of a human being which culture merely helps to hide but which cannot be nullified. Animality does not signify life in Otkowicz's writing, it is an illusion of movement and existence, instantaneity, inevitably degenerating within the object: the deceased, dear and beloved though she had been, resembled a puppet. And this ultimate objection, naive and helpless. The inability to object does not result from the resistance of the external reality – objective, real, determined... – but the helplessness of the subject who would like to save the historicity of a beloved person, but this historicity is already missing in his own memory. Historicity as a silent challenge" (Szymutko, 2011: 22–23).

In the cited lengthy extract, the author got three discourses to collide: the Silesian dialect, literary Polish and the scientific jargon. In the three paragraphs he writes about the same, each time differently. Another language, another form, another thought. Let us not play cards close to our chest, for a careful reader of *Nagrobek*, the cards are already on the table. Dominik Otkowicz is Szymutko's *alter ego*, invented for the purpose of his essay. Some other open cards say that his parents planned to christen him as Dominik but in the end he was named after his grandfather – Otkowitz was his last name. Besides, the author himself admits to making up the Silesian extract of the already mentioned *Zaczyn*: "Mystification, bringing to life a writer who has never existed (namely Dominik Otkowicz), attributing to him own literary experience, pretending that I translate from Silesian into Polish while it was the other way round (together with Maria and Jan Nowak over vodka shots and having fun in their kitchen we rewrote my Polish words forming their Silesian equivalents), shameless, provocative interpreting an extract written by myself (the author and researcher in one, *wash and go*)" (Szymutko, 2013: 177). Funny and naive – suggests the author under the Silesian extract, the plainness of the dialect being enhanced by his lyrical translation and the seriousness

of scientific interpretation. The Silesian language lacks words rendering the pathos of life and expressing one's struggling with the abstraction of death. What is supposed to be grand and tragic – becomes a joke. This extract is also very telling about the phatic function of text and Szymutko's model reader who was meant to be the receiver of the message. He was not meant to be Silesian, or not only Silesian anyway. It is unlikely that somebody who has used the dialect all their life would find the sound of it amusing. In Szymutko's joke there is a bit of a juvenile laugh frequent in the jokes about the Czech language. An average Pole finds it amusing hearing our southern neighbours speak although they are presumably not amused by their own language. We do not suppose it is only the reader's laugh the author has sought. "There is perhaps no one else [...] in whom logos suffers so much as in Silesians. Not because it might stay in their dialect. Most Silesian utterances can be easily rendered into sublime themes" (Szymutko, 2011: 34).

Translation is necessary if we are to cope with the crudeness and lack of respect for abstraction in the Silesian speak. Let us remind that for Szymutko this dialect for "a spiritual boy" is *karlus z kwiotkiem w rzyci* ['a kid with a flower in his bum']. At this point we might return once more to the discussion on the system of education as understood by Pierre Bourdieu – legalised terror which by means of acts of symbolic violence deprives learners of vital contact with their culture. Now we can close the subject: Szymutko is an evident advocate for a system of education (although he sometimes indicates its deficiencies). Learning literary Polish allowed him to find the "missing words" for expressing pain – so that it would not become its own parody: especially when became received by a more general public. The drama of death was translated into the language in which it obtained appropriate form. The "scientific" excerpt, in this perspective, is a comment on the last stage of the author's education: literary studies allowed Szymutko to understand what he was actually writing about his childhood in the shadow of death, his "biological shock," his desperate awareness of the end. Its final expression is the essay *Pożegnanie*, in which, perhaps not incidentally, we will not come across any Silesian word at all. "Aren't I a tool of Logos my grandfather had disregarded all his life?" (Szymutko, 2011: 37).

At the same time, the whole extract constitutes a seal on Szymutko's Silesian identity: it is a joke, "Silesian fun, introducing an element of frivolity wherever it is least expected" (from the extract about the match from *Chłopcy z Cimoka* (Szymutko, 2011: 58)).

The author does not nullify the point of entry, reaches for form to bring it out. He treats each of the presented narrations ironically, each one of them, in its own special way, drives him away from the suffering he would like to express: in the first one he is lost for words, in the second one the beauty of the language steals despair, in the third one the scientific jargon distances us from the theme discussed. And Szymutko means exactly these words, the words which will render pain, but which will not serve their own purpose. In the comment on the anecdote about Aunt Cilia's shoes the author writes: "How much would I like to cry out to her after these years: '*Don't you worry, Aunt Cilia! We Silesians are so silly, we keep forgetting our shoes. We just walk and hurt our feet.*' And then complete my call with a clever interpretation, in which shoes would be an allegory of a word for a word, a word-sugarcoat, a word-insulation from the too complicated problems: not worn shoes on the other hand – an expression of a longing for a word that will relieve fear, pain and death" (Szymutko, 2011: 27). Later on he adds that in fact he thinks of Derrida, trace, presence/non-presence. For Szymutko, what determines Silesianness is the sensuous, matter-of-fact contact with reality, resistance to the illusion of words which are deceitful – they conceal the fragility, ridiculousness and insignificance of the world. "Aunt Cilia does not have to draw close to what is the nearest (tame the familiar) and a word only exists for her if it is a response to a challenge of being, living, existing. When approached with a question of what I have inherited from the indigenous culture I will answer immediately and easily: attachment to my own historicity, and a concept of a word which should never serve itself, otherwise one becomes a *beblok*, *faflok*, *fafuła*, *klyta*, or *pierdola dziyń dobry*" (Szymutko, 2011: 26). In the Silesian culture, the author adds "the language is never treated seriously although the speakers deny talking nonsense" (Szymutko, 2011: 35). This is a language of the profane where instead of myth we have *godka*, *szpas*, *bera*, *bojka*. "Grandfather Stefan was predisposed to logos" (Szymutko, 2011: 34), but he disregarded it, suppressed logos, he would sing rather than speak. The

practicalism of plebeian culture: education must serve a purpose, logos must be a response to existence, this is Heidegger's dream come true (we will not include the famous quotation).

On the basis of his grandfather's biography Szymutko shows how in the 20th-century logos became vague babble, political interest – ideology. His grandfather's reluctance to indulge in idle chatter allowed him to stay a good man, well disposed towards the world and people. Words had no power over him: he was not to become a Nazi, his proletarian style was an effect of his living conditions, not communist slogans.¹ 'My grandmother and grandfather were proletarians, not yet spoilt by the socialists, proletarians who knew hatred and devotion: they draw "energy from the portrayal of tamed predecessors and not from the ideal of liberated grandchildren' (Benjamin)" (Szymutko, 2011: 36). It is not only about the political ideology. Granny Marika, who stayed distrustful of metaphysics until the end, even before she died she would not look up to it for useless comfort, an illusion of better worlds. Alike Aunt Cila, who, would not, on her deathbed, look for the sublime through a prayer – she would reconcile with her animal nature (this is as Szymutko the writer has it – the grandson was not a witness of her dying). A Silesian will not embellish suffering with a phrase, might laugh it off at the most. They will be silent where words cannot add anything, because the author thinks, let us say it again: "historicality is a silent challenge" (Szymutko, 2011: 23).

In Silesian culture one remains silent about great themes, leaving empty space (presence/non-presence) in response to the terror of existence. Derrida returns, not incidentally though: "It is enough to be born Silesian, inherit the Silesian genes and be brought up by a Silesian woman (such as my grandmother) to become even in your childhood a pro-postmodernist – so strong is anti-logocentrism in Silesianness, the resistance to the appropriating forces of discourse, usurpations of reason, anti-fundamentalism" (Szymutko, 2011: 36). And it really is so, *Nagrobek* is of a postmodernist nature, especially in

¹ Obviously, it is Szymutko's vision, we could have it clashed, in polemic terms, with a less favourable picture of Silesians and their ideological choices made during the Second World War from Janosch's *Cholonek*. It seems that there is more to both of these worlds. Both Szymutko's and Janosch's heroes are guided in their life choices by pure pragmatism. However, the former writes about good people, the latter – not necessarily.

form. Szymutko collides discourses, uses irony, multiplies paradoxes, gets the polyphony of quotations involved in the apology of silence. But, careful with the classifications, it is a signal of a life attitude not a confession of the academic faith. Poststructuralists' anti-logocentrism is for Szymutko a yet another type of discourse with similarly appropriating claims. Szymutko's distrust towards logos stems from the longing for a word which will stand up to the requirements of the reality. Education offers tools, one has to keep looking – if you are to talk nonsense, you better remain silent. "I want and I can remember but I will not be able to put down memory despite the fact that I do my best not to let my presence disappear in its representation. I look for words and I hold my presence simultaneously. Proud post-structuralists, pompous (post)critics of the metaphysics of presence will obviously contradict. Idle statements that representation comes first, the word is first, obviously. As if we were never present. I find irritating people with doors at their backs (after Karol Irzykowski), Derrida's pseudo-followers, in fact the true descendants of Ivan the Homeless, who nearly persuaded Satan that he did not exist. Dogs of non-existence" (Szymutko, 2013: 192).

Recent allies become opponents whenever they get seduced by narration, when they, instead of looking for the truth – hidden somewhere between reality and language – will abandon the reality for theory. They will fall for the tools, "garrulous idlers," forgetting about the goal: science which is to serve somebody/something except itself. "Our desperate, sophisticated though they are, procedures of including the reality into the structures of language (multisense, prosense, supersense, etc.), struggling for putting reality in the forms of speech: insisting for example on the sensuality of a word other than sonic when it is obvious that only onomatopoeia is sensual. Our multisense and our polisemy and opposite to it the borderline monosense of death. Friedrich Nietzsche argued in the 19th century that a myth is the aim of knowledge, and the history of education – the history of drugs" (Szymutko, 2011: 80). Krzysztof Uniłowski in the preface to *Nagrobek* observes that the author considering the behaviours of his heroes, draws to poststructuralism in order "to turn against it" (Szymutko, 2011: 95). Significantly, Jakub Momro in *Dekada literacka* finds that just the opposite happens: Szymutko "writes from the very

heart of the poststructuralist discourse [...] [because] such essays could not have been written by someone who had not been in touch with the newest language of literary studies and philosophy” (Momro, 2002: 189–190). Basically, both are right. Professor Szymutko does not trust, according to the sign of the times, logos – but thinks that it is what is Silesian in him, it is his heritage, not just another intellectual fashion. The scholar looks at the plebeian in himself in order to ask the past about his presence. The life story which could have been a beginning of narration about “leaving the *familok* house,” social advancement and the price one pays for it: a loss of language, environment and continuity, becomes, on the contrary, a story about the awareness of roots. “I have already mentioned that it is a book about identity, about identifying oneself. In one of the interviews I said that by writing about it I realised just how much I am connected with the environment I have never actually abandoned” (Szymutko, 2013: 208).

While looking for his continuity – dealing with himself, the author gives Silesia back to the present, buys it back from the state commercial folklore: this world responds to the challenges of the contemporariness, speaks its language. The prophesied end of grand narratives has its Silesian counterpart, or better still: its Silesian source. The professor from Mysłowice keeps his finger on the pulse of (post) modernity. The province has its share in the transformations of the wide world, experiencing them and while trying to understand – it shares its experience. The particular becomes the universal. Thus, *Nagrobek* is not just a, more or less, sentimental, journey to the land of childhood, the world that does not exist anymore. It is proof of vitality, despite the fact that the concrete, tangible evidence of the past, can be found now, after Szymutko but perhaps without his pain, on landfills and cemeteries.

Epilogue

The character of the analysis undertaken in this work was determined by, so to say, two main factors. The first is the study's specific subject matter in the form of literary work while the other – a theoretical perspective which we based our interpretation on. We concentrated mainly on the selected works of the authors particularly related to Upper Silesia for a reason. And it was no coincidence we used to this end the theoretical perspective of Raymond Williams as we believed the look at the literary world through the lens of the structures of feeling, provides interesting interpretive possibilities. Especially in the artistic form of a description of “a little homeland” we saw a wide range of examples richly illustrating the main assumptions of Williams's concept. We also remembered about the role of literature in the creation of the community's representation of a community, which both deserves and needs it, so emphasised by John Kirk. Among the variety of forms of communication literature is a special tool. It allows us to express our experiences as well as individual and social feelings related to real life situations on a number of levels. We hope we have managed to some extent to portray the “structure” of these feelings, so firmly attached to the quality of life in a concrete place. The place in which experiencing the present is so

strongly connected with history, which, in turn, is still exerting an enormous influence on thinking about the future. We also intended to treat it as a place where it would be relatively clear to discern what in its culture is dominant, residual and what seems to emerge in it as a new quality, both giving hope and causing concern. Literature was to help us in our attempt at describing, at this very angle, the phenomenon of Upper Silesianness.

We treated the adopted theoretical perspective as a way to gain some insight into the artistic world of literature, which we were trying to look at as if it had been a picture from which personal experiences of individuals, groups and social classes emanated. A world provoking us – through the authors’ masterclass use of forms of expression – to reflect upon what tends to be more difficult to grasp in direct relations based on “hard” data.

The analyses of Kazimierz Kutz’s and Stefan Szymutko’s writings presented in this book were to draw our attention to the present in fiction issues connected with the essence of Upper Silesia and Silesians. The artistic form allows us to emphasise particularly the specificity of the region, reinforced by personal beliefs and emotions of a great variety of its inhabitants. Also, to highlight, in epic terms, the references to the region’s industrial and agricultural past and the difficult history of individuals and groups, entwined with ‘capital H’ History. What we have here are heroes epitomising the characteristics of the passing world: work ethos, working-class roots, plethora of languages (including the dialect) and customs.

Kazimierz Kutz as a writer “talks Silesia” differently than he does as a film maker. He shows Silesia from a different perspective. In comparison with the films, in Kutz’s novel we deal more with a homage paid to the “Silesianness” of the region rather than its Polishness. We were trying to point out that *Piąta strona świata* is interesting in sociological terms for a number of reasons. What we thus have to do with here is not only a Silesian’s original account and the characteristics of his little homeland’s culture. It is also a description of the relations between the individual and society, interpreting important social phenomena in an original way. Sometimes it underlines and confirms what researchers already know, sometimes – it directs our attention towards areas thus far recognized by science to a lesser extent than by art.

Whether we deal with a great idealisation of the Silesian culture or with an exaggerated realism – these are always aspects of the same original, experienced and – through literature – objectified reality. Kutz's fiction is nostalgic and presents the Silesian reality as a feature 'converted' to make the most of it and for the purpose of making it the main character of the book. Fiction then serves the view of the real world, constitutes a sort of a gateway to its nooks and crannies. They can hide painful secrets, restricted as taboo, there can also emerge – more or less knowingly – images in which there is more wishful thinking, than will to cope with the demands of everyday life. Both the sensitive matters and wishful thinking obviously constitute important elements of social culture and the novel offers an opportunity to talk about it in a way which enables a broader discussion.

Nostalgia for some aspects of tradition that are lost forever poignantly borders on a strong underlining of the current and still confirmed strength of those of its elements that decide on its separate identity. There is, however, also an uneasy reflection on the Silesian mentality comprising not only a list of all human virtues. This is yet another fundamental difference between Kutz's literary and film creation. In the latter, we will find virtually no comments on the 'disabled' and permanently hurt Silesianness.

Similarly, through his history – his own historicity, the story of his family – his "past days," images of his kith and kin, dead and alive, descriptions of places and demeanor, Silesianness is revoked by Stefan Szymutko. While writing about Silesia the author discloses a portrayal of the region, includes detailed information, provides data, characteristic features, draws from the Silesian reality to bring out those of its elements that he finds distinctive; therein his search for his identity starts with the very first sentence. In *Nagrobek ciotki Cili* the author sketches portraits of his generation and the generation of his grandparents so that the latter is not forgotten and left to oblivion along with the passing of traditional Silesianness. He is thus looking in himself and his peers for their features, habits, attitudes towards family, language and work (or football) – attitudes which are for him and, admittedly not only for him, common to the region's culture. These two generations, separately, represent different Silesias: Szymutko's generation observed

the decline of their grandparents' world, which was being transformed before their eyes "from the industrial-agricultural to solely industrial" (Szymutko, 2011: 43). The author confronts the values and lifestyles of two generations in order to look in the Silesian culture for what is residual and what is emergent. During this process Silesianness is questioned, it needs redefining, demands its position in the changing reality. Szymutko draws from the past in order to bring the present back to Silesia.

It is not about surprising the reader with a different, new, non-canonical image of the traditional Silesianness as this image is familiar to the sociologist. Szymutko, a dialect-speaking boy from Cimok, who at the time of writing *Nagrobek* has already been a professor specialising in Polish literature, translates his transgression into the process of the transformation of Silesia and Silesianness. The biography of a young man from Myslowice who has advanced from a *familok* house to his own block flat at a housing estate positions the author among a numerous group of compatriots who have taken a similar path within several decades of the previous century. But this biography that might have been a beginning of a story about "leaving a *familok* house," social advancement and a price one pays for such an advancement: the loss of language, environment and continuity, becomes, contrarily, a story about roots awareness. Accordingly, for Szymutko the "true" Silesia, the one that is plebeian, ardently religious, with many numerous offspring and above all, valuing hard manual work – is one of his grandparents' generation. Accordingly, the author perceives Silesianness through a generation of people passing away or already long deceased. His "late" generation could only have followed them, drawing patterns not necessarily from life though: "But even our Silesianness was partly artificial, pretended, taken (for example) from the films" (Szymutko, 2011: 50), let us add: films by Kazimierz Kutz. Following this track, a sociologist will see *Chłopy z Cimoka* as a story of the clashing of the true/untrue Silesian world values with modernity, resulting in splitting, shifting from one culture to another, from this Silesian plebeianism to a culture which is "worldly anyway – yet, remembering about the former" (Szymutko, 2013: 216–217). The "worldliness" of the contemporary (maybe also the old) Silesian culture is brought out by the author through showing

that in the realm of literature, art and philosophy, the geographical situation of the region does not necessarily have to make its residents destined to parochialism and provincialism. By all means, this was not the case with Upper Silesia.

Therefore, looking for his continuity – dealing with himself – Szymutko gives Silesia back to the present, buys it back from the state commercial folklore: this world responds to the challenges of the contemporariness, speaks its language. The emphasised otherness of the Silesian culture, its strangeness paradoxically opens it up to the non-Silesian worlds. The province is taking part in the transformations of the wide world, experiencing and sharing them while taking the effort to understand the ongoing changes. In Szymutko's writings the particular becomes the universal. Thus, *Nagrobek* is not just a sentimental journey to the land of childhood, the world which does not exist anymore. This is a fight for Silesia's 'historicality' so that its past should be not forgotten or nullified.

This image of Silesia is no surprise to a sociologist and was not meant to be one, as it is not about 'discovering' Silesia but re-producing it. Szymutko, a dialect-speaking boy from Cimok, who already was a professor of Polish literature when writing *Nagrobek*, reconstructs the process of "betrayal," of the voluntary, considering the specificity of the previous century, eradication of the rather difficult history of Silesia. The author traces back the origins of the process of renouncing the Silesian identity in the name of (in his opinion – wrongly understood) "historicity" identified with social advancement, recognition and a professional career in the monocultural Polish society. The transition from living in a *familok* to a flat, getting rid of the dialect in favour of the laboriously practiced proper Polish was the path taken by many of his colleagues in Mysłowice. And yet, though for most of Szymutko's compatriots this process likely caused separation from own, native culture, for him it was the road to a conscious cognition of his Silesian roots. A distant perspective allows to perceive what is basic, relevant and significant. For Szymutko the "true" Silesia – plebeian, ardently religious, with multiple offspring and above all valuing physical work – belongs to the generation of his grandparents. In this way, the author recognizes his own Silesianness through a generation of people who are either aging or long-time gone. His own generation

was already “late,” ineptly reproducing – with no particular desire anyway – the life style of the elders. Even before leaving the *familok* the betrayal process had begun. Still, the mental foundation, the way of seeing the world, has been laid and allowed for unique ways of dealing with reality. Szymutko’s search for the universal in regional legacy resulted in discovering that an allegedly particularistic value system turned out to be thoroughly humanistic, immersed in the European – or universal – cultural heritage. Therefore, the region’s geographical location does not necessarily sentence its predestine to parochialism and provincialism. The explicit otherness of the Silesian culture, its foreignness, paradoxically opens it to the Not-Silesian worlds. And its peculiar advantage has always been remaining distant to Logos, to abstraction, in favour of a firm grip on the practical, a close relationship with the everyday life. The Silesian ethos was not something just featured, but lived as an ordinary element of existence. This way provinciality participates, in a strict sense, in the transformations of the wide world, experiences them and, while trying to understand, lends it its own wisdom. Szymutko’s memories are not only a – more or less – sentimental journey to the country of his childhood, a world that no longer exists. It is a fight for the “historicity” of Silesia, so that its past is not forgotten or invalidated.

The elements which make up the Silesian working-class habitus are viewed through the lens of Raymond Williams’s concept of the structures of feeling. They are deeply rooted in it, thus the tool in the form of Williams’s concept (enhanced by Kirk’s reflection) might just as well serve this kind of sociological research into literature which would fully combine the idea of the structures of feeling with a reinterpretation of the role of the social classes. Viewed from this perspective, the Silesian literature provides material for observing the tension between the residual and the emergent features of its culture. In Kutz’s and Szymutko’s memories the process of socialisation and education relied on the key role of Silesian families in securing the internalisation of the values important for the Silesian ethos such as, above all, reliability and importance of work and professional duties, value of family life, religiousness, truthfulness and honesty in everyday life or eventually a peculiar spirit of resistance to life’s hardships. This outline of the region’s culture, described by the two

authors has constituted an ironclad set of elements, both residual and still dominant, of the Silesian structures of feeling. It is a cultural core constituting the basis for self-identification: a place of birth and a thoroughly working-class and plebeian culture. For Szymutko and Kutz Silesia has remained a culturally marked region; Silesianness as a set of specific social and cultural features as well as the character of a Silesian born in the region and linked to the cultural tradition of Upper Silesia is repeated in the analysed works of the writers as a method of recognizing one's own and social identity. Szymutko and Kutz also point to the emergent elements of the Polish People's Republic culture shattering the unity of the Silesian community. The oeuvre of both is marked by a sense of a gradual uprooting: the uprooting from a place where a familok house was replaced by a block of flats, the uprooting from the language when the Silesian dialect became a synonym of habitual parochialism, finally abandoning one's own culture paradoxically never to free oneself from it: by writing about these in books (Szymutko) or making films about it (Kutz). It is through these books and films that both authors create the image of the region, through which the transmission to the area of art becomes a sort of an archetype of Silesian culture, a myth to which both writers refer, from which they draw while jointly creating it. It is through this very model that we learn the past and present Silesianness.

Also, we cannot but remember about the possibility of looking at the Silesian community taking into consideration its class aspects. In the theoretical assumptions which have inspired us and worked as a point of reference, the above-mentioned notion of class plays a significant role. After all, one must not forget that social researchers in the West constantly treat it as one of the most important, if not fundamental, terms used to describe and explain social phenomena (at the level of both theoretical reflection and empirical research). Historical circumstances made class an unpopular term, particularly after 1989, eradicated not only from the public debate but also from scientific discourse due to its Marxist origin and connotations. While abroad researchers continued to carry out studies on the condition, transformations, a decline/rise of the importance of social classes, in our country they tended to avoid using such rhetoric. We are aware

of the fact that we have also treated the “class theme” in a way which in other Western countries might have been considered insufficient. This kind of approach, however, does not result (or so it seems to us, not only) from the above-mentioned causes. We would not have treated class straightforwardly as an analytical category, although – in the light of the analysed material – we still *de facto* navigated the class social domain. In the case of Upper Silesia, so firmly traditionally connected with the macro-industrial culture, it is not only inevitable, but it also simply must be considered something almost natural. We thus did not mean it to be a directed analysis not to make the scope of insight into the rich interpretive material at our disposal restricted. According to Pierre Bourdieu’s concept the reproduction of *class* structure occurs through *habitus*. In novels/autobiographies of particular importance was an outlined distance between primary and secondary *habitus* where the primary *habitus* was based on what is residual – the traditional values of the Silesian folk culture while the secondary *habitus* (school, studies, professional career) was connected with the values of the national Polish culture. Asked how he felt as a Silesian in Łódź Film School, Kutz replied: “I was a misfit there [...] I grew up in a certain culture, in a certain system of values – with all its advantages and disadvantages. This was my unconscious code, but it dictates me a certain way of looking at things” (Kutz 1987: 6). The renowned artists: the film director and the professor of Polish literature constantly refer to the resources of the Silesian primary *habitus* in order to say something not only about the region but also about the Polish culture as such.

Seemingly, the conceptual model designed in this book may help create a separate conceptual instrumental side, which would allow us to “tame” a recently discernible sort of renaissance of the notion and category of class in our national academic discussion. It is to be hoped that this book will be of use also to those researchers who – in the wake of this revival and in comparison, with similar works in Europe and worldwide – will find this resource useful in studying the intra- and inter-class processes.

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